Metaphysical and Spiritual Concepts

Of the Upanishads Explained

##

English Exposition by:-

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia

Ayodhya (Faizabad, U.P.)

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.
Mobile: +919451290400 (whatsapp + voice call); +919935613060 (voice call)

CONTENTS

1—Atma and the various Sheaths – Page 4

2—The Body of the creature (The body of the living being consists of Bhuts, Dhaatus, Tattvas etc.) – Page 16

3—The various States of Existence of Consciousness – Page 32

4—Macrocosm and Microcosm – Page 98

5—Vrittis and Vasanas – Page 104

6—The Gunas – Page 115

7—Mental Flux – Page 135

8—The Five Basic Elements – Page 135

9—Brahm Randhra, Braham Dwar and Brahm Vivar – Page 148

10—Meditation and contemplation – Page 156

11—Spirituality – Page 165

12—Dhyan (Dhyaan)– Page 166

13—Upasana – Page 168

14—Mukti – Page 169

15—Maya – Page 211

16—Prakriti – Page 264

17—The Vital Winds or Prans – Page 267

18—Kalaa – Page 304

19—The Tattwas – Page 311

20—Theory of Karma – Page 359

21—Akash (Sky element and its subtlety)– Page 383

22—Sat-Chit-Anand – Page 394

23—Bhumika — Page 400

24—Scientific view – Page 419

25—About the Author & his Books– Page 421

26—Diagrams and Sketches – Page 425

27—Dedication – Page 434

Concepts of Vedanta explained

"May my mind-intellect, which is an instrument through which I gain knowledge, spiritual and general, which is steadied, which is the eternal light that illuminates everything for me and all other living beings, and without which no work can be done, be of an auspicious and righteous inclinations and resolutions"—Yajur Veda, 34/1/6/3.

In this Book we shall acquaint ourselves with some basic concepts appearing in the Upanishad text in a very simple, layman's language. Relevant portions from different Upanishads have been cited to explain these terms whereever possible. A list of the terms and concepts covered in this appendix is given below with a serial number that would help one locate them in the text.

List of topics covered in this Book with their serial number are the following:— 1—Atma and the various Sheaths. 2—The Body of the creature. 3—The various States of Existence of Consciousness. 4—Macrocosm and Microcosm. 5—Vrittis and Vasanas. 6—The Gunas. 7—Mental Flux. 8—The five basic Elements. 9—Brahm Randhra, Braham Dwar and Brahm Vivar. 10—Meditation and contemplation. 11—Spirituality. 12—Dhyan. 13—Upasana. 14—Mukti. 15—Maya. 16—Prakriti. 17—The Vital Winds or Prans. 18—Kalaa. 19—The Tattwas. 20—Theory of Karma. 21—Akash. 22—Sat-Chit-Anand. 23—Bhumika. 24—Scientific view.

Some explanatory charts and diagrams have been added at the end to aid understanding.

_____******_____

(1) Atma and the five sheath/veils surrounding it:-The Atma is the pure-self, the pure consciousness of the creature which is a microscopic reflection of the vast macrocosmic Soul of the cosmos called Brahm. The Atma provides life or consciousness to the inert layers of matter consisting of the five elements of air, water, space, fire and earth which crystallise to form the five coverings or sheaths around the pure Atma, and together (the Atma and the five sheaths) they create what we call the 'living being', whether plant, animal or humans.

The Atma, the pure conscious soul of the creature, is said to live in a body that constitutes of five sheaths or cells. In other words, the Atma is present in an enclosure that has five consecutive rings around it, acting like the walls of a great fort.

The Panch Kosha—These are the five sheaths covering or enveloping the Atma are as follows—(i) The food sheath; (ii) the vital air sheath; (iii) the mental sheath; (iv) the intellectual sheath; (v) and the bliss sheath.

The Food Sheath:—Is the physical body and derives its name because it is nourished by the food eaten by the creature. It consists of five organs of perception (eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin) and five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, genitals and anus).

The Vital Air Sheath:--Is the five-fold faculties of perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching), excretion (faeces, urine, sperm, sputum, sweat etc.), digestion (stomach, intestine, liver, pancreas, gall bladder, appendix), circulation (blood stream, artery, vein, capillary, heart) and thinking (the power to entertain, absorb and assimilate new information and thought).

The Mental Sheath:—It consists of the equipment which receives external stimuli through the sense organs and links it to the organs of action. Integrated response of body to the stimuli is done through the mind sheath. It is a continuous flow of thoughts. Because the mind is characterised by being in a state of flux, the mind (mental sheath), which is like a clerk, receives information (as stimuli) from the organs of perception and dispatches them to either the organs of action or the intellect when certain situations demand intelligent thinking and discrimination. Therefore, the mental sheath controls the vital air sheath and the food sheath.

The Intellect Sheath:—It acts as a controlling mechanism over the mind; It regulates, filters and modifies the response to the various stimuli. It has the discriminatory power which the mind, left alone to it, lacks.

The intellect sheath is the chief of the whole setup—in fact it controls the mind sheath, and through it, the functioning of the creature. It is the task master that directs the reckless horde of school boys running amok hither and thither, as it were. Those boys who obey this teacher become civilised and educated while the rest of the bunch remains buffoons or ruffians. The intellect can distinguish between the good and the bad, which the mental sheath cannot. The intellect can see beyond the realm of the known while the mind cannot. The intellect sheath is the spring board for all ideas and ideologies. The intellect helps to stabilise and channelise the mind even as the dam controls the river and harnesses its immense energy to produce powerful electricity.

These two sheaths—the mind and the intellect—are called the subtle sheaths or bodies. They have no physical structure in conventional terms like the gross or physical body called the food sheath or Anna Maya Kosh (consisting of the organs of perception and organs of action) as well as the air sheath (called the Pran Maya Kosh) of the creature. This subtle sheath has only functional aspect. The mental and intellect sheaths are like software of a computer vis-à-vis the food and vital sheaths which resemble the hardware paraphernalia of the entire system.

The Bliss Sheath:—Is the innermost sheath surrounding the Atma/the soul. It consists of 'inherent tendencies' or 'Vasanas' and 'Vrittis' before they are manifested into thoughts or actions. The intellect, mind etc. perform under the guidance and control of the bliss sheath. It is so-called because an individual experiences relative bliss, happiness, joy,

contentedness, peace and tranquility when he is associated with it.

In the waking and dream states, a man experiences constant agitation of the mind, but once he reaches the realm of deep sleep state (bliss sheaths), he feels undisturbed, tranquil, peaceful and full of bliss. All agitations cease here. It is a relative experience vis-à-vis the other sheaths. This sheath is also called the Causal Body of the creature.

The five sheaths are all inane, inert and inactive, and they constitute of matter. This together forms the personality of the Jiva, the living creature. He is conscious of all that his happening around him but these five sheaths are inert themselves. So naturally, there must be something distinct and separate from these sheaths that lend the Jiva the so-called life or consciousness. That factor which lends life or consciousness to the Jiva is called Atma, pure consciousness or the pure self of the creature. It is also the true identity or self of the Jiva.

	Deep sleeper	⇔	Causal body	
	Deep sleeper	⇔	Causal body	
Personality of the	→ Dreamer	⇔	Subtle body	← Atma
Jiva (creature)	Waker	⇔	gross body	

(Diagram showing interaction between the Jiva and the Atma.)

The concept of 'Panch Kosh' have been described in a number of Upanishads as follows--The five Koshas have been described in other Upanishad also. Some of them are (i) Rig Veda—Mudagal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 5; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4; and (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 3-6; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 5; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 21-26.

The *Sarwasaar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 5 describes the concept of the five Koshas of the body as follows—

"Verse no. 5. The gross aspect or part of the physical body which is build up of and nourished by the food eaten by the creature and the fundamental elements that this food contains as its basic nutrients is called the 'Anna Maye Kosh' or the food sheath. [This Anna Maye Kosh acts as an envelop that surrounds the Atma or pure conscious self of the creature, and hence the name 'Kosh' or a shell or a veil that acts as an enclosure surrounding the 'self' like an envelop enclosing its contents.]

When Pran and other fourteen types of life-infusing vital winds enter this gross and basically lifeless body formed by the food eaten by the creature and begin moving inside it, thereby lending it their own dynamic forces of 'life' and making it show all signs characteristic of 'life', then the part of the body in which these vital winds move about is called the 'Pran Maye Kosh' or the vital air sheath. [This sheath in subtler than the earlier sheath because it has air or wind element as its basic constituent instead of the grosser elements of food eaten by the creature that constitute the outer shell known as the Anna Maye Kosh.]

The third layer that surrounds the Atma is the 'Mano Maye Kosh' or the mind sheath because it consists of the subtle mind which helps the creature's pure consciousness or 'self' to perceive the presence of the body and the external world in which it lives by the means of the fourteen instruments (as described in verse no. 4 above). This Mano Maye Kosh is internal to the other two sheaths, and closer to the Atma than them. [The mind is the subtle reception center and coordinator of all inputs originating in the external world received through the organs of perception, and it gives commands to the organs of action present in the distant corners of the body. The mind acts as the head clerk of the Emperor known as the Atma of the creature. The inputs are sorted out by the mind and necessary information stored for future retrieval in the archives of the memory and the sub-conscious. But like all head clerks, the mind cannot decide policy matters and take important decisions, and for this it relies upon the intellect called Buddhi.]

When the conscious Atma or the pure 'self' of the creature coordinates the inputs of all the earlier three instruments at its disposal (i.e. the 'food sheath' consisting of the gross body with its sense organs of perception and action, the 'air sheath' which enables the body to breathe and live a fruitful life as an active entity instead of lying like a dead log of wood, and the 'mental sheath' which helps the Atma to make sense of all the inputs that it receives and which helps it to coordinate between the different disjointed facets of creation into one meaningful existence) and ponders over the alternatives and take intelligent decisions, it (i.e. the Atma) is helped in its endeavour by the subtler aspect of the mind called the 'intellect' or the 'thinking, analytical and discriminating aspect of the mind'. So, when the Atma is attended to by the intellect which aids in its intelligent thinking, helping it in analyzing the pros and cons of a giving situation, discriminating between any given two options depending upon their worth and goodness, it is said to be surrounded by the intellect sheath called the 'Vigyan Maye Kosh'. [Vigyan implies that knowledge which is based on intelligent thinking by the instrument of the 'intellect' that is 'rational, well thought after, well deliberated and well balanced', taking into considerations all the pros and cons of any given circumstance. It is different from impulsive actions which the emotional 'mind' might take. So, the intellect is analytical and clinical in its approach to any given situation in this world. It acts like the chief advisor and prime minister of the Emperor represented by the Atma.]

When the Atma, along with all these instruments at its disposal, lives in a state of oblivion about its true self and its nature even though it is being provided with all the necessary instruments represented by these four layers of metaphoric 'helpers' who can aid the Atma in its research and ferreting out the actual 'truth' about its self as well as the fact that this body which it erroneously thinks to be its true 'self' is actually not so, it is said that it (i.e. the Atma) lives in a cocoon of 'blissfulness'.

It is like the case of the banyan tree not knowing or being unaware of the fact that it had its origin in the small 'seed' which is its actual and truthful form because the whole tree is subtly and secretly present in this seed and it is from this seed that it originates, and not in the external visible format as is seen of it in this world. This external form of the tree is mortal as one day or

the other it would decay and die. Similarly, the creature remains oblivious of the fact that his body is perishable and would die some day, and the only entity that would not perish is the Atma. The new birth of the creature depends upon the Atma and not the body. [This mystery is beautifully explained by sage Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse nos. 28/1-28/7.]

The creature is unaware that this body is a bundle of grossness and reprehensible things (such as flesh, muscles, bones, blood, mucous, nerves and veins, faecal and other garbage etc. enclosed in a sac-like skin—refer Yagyavalkya Upanishad, verse nos. 14-17 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; it is Chapter 17 of the third volume in this series), that this body is like a prison for him, that it is a swamp of miseries and torments. Similarly, the creature takes this world to be real and everlasting quite contrary to the reality of the situation; he thinks that the pleasures and comforts that the world provides is the best thing to be had and there is no better form of happiness and bliss. And this basic misconception leads the creature to get neck-deep in this swamp and remain oblivious of the reality.

This ignorance about the truth makes it live in a fool's paradise when it remains engrossed in the world and enjoying its comforts and pleasures. This fourth state of blissfulness is known as 'Anand Maye Kosh' or the bliss sheath because the Atma is surrounded by bliss and happiness (5).

[Note— Refer Mudagal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse 5 which lists these five Koshas. According to Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no. 4 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these are the following—" 'Annamaye Kosh' or the food sheath, 'Pranmaye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath, 'Manomaye Kosh' or the mental sheath, 'Vigyanmaye Kosh' or the intellect sheath, and 'Anandmaye Kosh' or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object.

The Annamaye Kosh is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The Pranmaye Kosh consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Udaan, and Samaan) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The Manomaye Kosh consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the Vigyanmaye Kosh consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the 'Ling Deha' of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the 'Ling Deha' is called Anandmaye Kosh. This forms the causal body of the creature".

These five sheaths are called the 'Panch Kosha'.]

The *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 21-26, describes the five sheaths called the 'Panch Koshas' and the consciousness that lives in these five sheaths as the 'Panch Atma' in the following way:-

"Verse no. 21 = The gross body made up of bones and veins etc. of all living beings called Jivas is therefore the result of the deeds done by them. [That is, the Atma, which is the true identity of the individual, assumes a particular physical form, i.e. assumes a particular gross body, depending upon the deeds done by it in its previous life.][1]

Thus, the gross body of the creature is the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath[2] of the Atma. That is, the pure consciousness has assumed this gross body which is formed and sustained by the food eaten by the individual. When the consciousness reveals itself in this sheath, it is known as the 'Anna Maye Atma', or the consciousness that depends upon food for its survival and which has a gross physical structure much like the gross form in which food exists in creation (as vegetables, cereals, fruits and other eatables)[3] (21).

[Note—*Why the five Koshas are called the Panch Atma have been explained in note to verse no. 23 below.

The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.

[2]The Atma lives surrounded by five sheaths, called the 'Panch Koshas'. These Koshas form the composite structure recognised as the body of the creature or Jiva. The Atma is the 'true self' of the individual Jiva, while these Koshas are the covering sheaths which enclose the Atma and form its habitat during its sojourn in this life. They

wrap the Atma and form its outer recognizable form. These Koshas are what give the Atma its visible and recognizable form in this world—such as Godhead, a demon, a human, an animal and a bird. Therefore we can compare the Jiva or his true self the Atma as the glittering gem gifted wrapped in a five-layered cloth which is so magnificently wonderful and fascinatingly unique that more often than not it outshines the glory of the principal entity for which they were meant. In other words, one is so awe-struck by the external body that he forgets to even un-wrap the package and peer in to look what is hidden inside.

The outermost is called the food sheath or Anna Maye Kosh. The rest of the Koshas are enumerated in the following verses.

[3]This is an obvious observation because no one has seen the sublime, subtle and invisible 'consciousness' as having an existence except in the form of the signs of life shown by the gross physical body which is sustained by the food eaten by the individual. Thus for all practical purposes, this consciousness, which is perceived in the form of the external form of the body, is recognised as being synonymous with it, i.e. as the Anna Maye Atma in line with the body being called the Anna Maye Kosh because of its dependence on food.]

"Verse no. 22 = Inside this Anna Maye Kosh is another sheath called the 'Pran Maye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath. This is the second form in which the consciousness known as the Atma is recognised. Thus, the consciousness that lives inside the gross body in a more subtle form as the vital life-sustaining winds is recognised as the 'Pran Maye Atma' in honour of these winds, and also because the Atma and the Pran are both synonymous with each other as far as the life of the individual is concerned as he cannot live without the either of them[1].

Next in this progression comes the 'Mano Maye Atma' or the consciousness that has revealed itself as the Mana or the subtle mind of the individual. This pertains to the Mano Maye Kosh or the mind sheath. This form of the consciousness is subtler than the Pran Maye Atma[2]. (22).

[Note—[1]Like its predecessor the Anna Maye Atma, the consciousness that flows inside the body and is represented by the vital winds such as Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan etc. is known as the Pran Maye Atma, named as such because the vital life sustaining winds are collectively called 'Pran'.

[2]The Mana is the subtle mind of the creature and the consciousness that drives the mind and keeps it active and enabled to carry on with its magnificent duties is the Atma consciousness known as Mano Maye Atma.]

"Verse no. 23 = The fourth form that the consciousness takes is called the 'Vigyan Maye Atma' because it pertains to the intellect sheath called the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath. This is subtler than the Mano Maye Atma and lives surrounded by the latter.

Subtler than all the other forms of conscious existence of the individual is known as the 'Anand Maye Atma' which pertains to the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. This is the innermost layer that surrounds the pure consciousness and is like the transparent veil covering the lighted lamp because it radiates the natural character of the Atma present inside it. Its natural characteristic is to be eternally blissful, contented and happy (23).

[Note—[1]It would be noted that the structure that has unfolded is like a circle within a circle. The outer and the first circle is the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, followed by the second inner circle called the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind sheath inside which is the third circle of Mano Maye Atma pertaining to the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, then comes the fourth circle of Vigyan Maye Atma pertaining to the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and finally the fifth one known as the Anand Maye Atma pertaining to the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths are called 'Atma' because they reflect consciousness and life in its various vibrant hues. For instance, the external Kosha called the Pran Maye Kosh which forms the basis of all organs of senses such as those related to perception and those to action have any value and significance for the creature only as long as they have 'life and consciousness' pulsating in each of its pore, cell and tissue. Otherwise they would be worthless and as good as being non-existent. What good and of use is a body which cannot see, hear, taste, feel and smell, or one which cannot move, hold anything, expel waste products from the inside, regenerate and procreate, and generally make life happy and livable for the Jiva—or in brief a body which has no consciousness in it? Since 'life' in all its connotations is synonymous with 'consciousness' or Atma, this Kosha which depends upon food to survive is called the Anna Maye Atma. And this is also the reason why food is equivalent to 'life' or Pran vis-à-vis a Jiva; food is the Atma of all living beings. They just cannot survive without food. The food is necessary for very survival of all life forms because it provides the outer covering that not only provides the necessary energy and strength but acts as a protective covering for the Atma. This is also the reason why the type of food eaten by a creature helps to classify him—such as non-vegetarians and vegetarians; such as carnivorous, herbivorous and omnivorous; such as civilized eaters or savage cannibals etc.

This logic can be extended to cover all the other four remaining sheaths. For instance, the Pran Maye Kosh is called the Pran Maye Atma because the signs of life and vitality that the vital winds present inside the body depict are a reflection of the presence of the consciousness in the body itself, for otherwise the same wind that is also present outside the body does not show any signs of life-sustaining qualities as the one present inside the body. This innate wind element of creation exhibits astounding ability to sustain life and performs miraculous duties of regulating so many functions of the body that life without wind is unthinkable. Had there been no consciousness in the body, the same wind would be worthless and wouldn't be able to sustain and make the body alive as is proved by the fact a dead body from which the Atma has left shows no signs of life and activity inspite of the wind element remaining in it. Thus the wind element that derives its life-sustaining abilities due the presence of the Atma is named after it as the Pran Maye Atma. It is actually the virtues of the Atma reflected in the wind element called the Pran. Both the Pran and the Atma are therefore treated as being synonymous.

Next is the Mano Maye Atma. The mind is the center that is the power-house of the living being; without the mind the creature would not receive any information from the outside world, cannot relate to it and cannot do anything whatsoever. The mind

regulates all its functions. This is a clear indication of the mind being a manifestation of the Atma's grand virtues. If there was no consciousness in the body, such as the case of a dead body in which the physical organ called the brain is still present in the head, the mind would not be able to think. The subtle and sublime entity that enables the mind and the subtle heart to think and have emotions is the Atma present inside the body, and therefore the grand virtues and characters of the Atma that are reflected in the form of the creature's Mana is called the Mano Maye Atma.

The Vigyan Maye Atma would then be the virtues of the Atma as reflected by the magnificent potentials and powers as depicted by the intellect present in the creature. The ability of the creature to research and analyse, to ponder and think deeply, to discriminate between the good and the bad etc. are manifestations of the stupendous abilities of the Atma, and therefore that unit or Kosha of the body that carries these functions is called the Vigyan Maye Atma.

Finally, there is the Anand Maye Kosh which encloses the Atma itself. This sheath that encloses the Atma acquires the latter's grand virtues of eternal blissfulness, contentedness and happiness because of its very close proximity to it. When a wise and enlightened Jiva comes in contact with this sheath he finds only one predominant character, and that is of eternal and undiluted 'Anand' or the state of blessedness marked by beatitude and felicity. He then realises that the closest sheath (the Anand Maye Kosh) is a reflection of these eclectic and sublime virtues of the Atma, and therefore it has been named the Anand Maye Atma.

The concept of the same Atma having various life-forms extending from one Kosha or one-celled organism to five Koshas or five-celled organism, and even to more complex creatures and structures that constitue the various units of this extremely enigmatic creation have been described in detail in this appendix under the heading 'Kalaa' in serial number 18.]

"Verse no. 24 = These different forms of the Atma enumerated above are just for the purpose of study and each depends upon the other in the order mentioned above—viz. the outer Anna Maye Atma is filled from the inside and is sustained by the Pran Maye Atma. Likewise, the Pran Maye Atma is filled by the Mano Maye Atma from the inside and is sustained by it (24).

"Verse no. 25 = The Mano Maye Atma is filled with the Vigyan Maye Atma from the inside and is sustained by it, and likewise the latter is filled by the Anand Maye Atma and sustained by it from the inside[1] (25).

[Note—[1]This concept can be understood by a simple example of the earth. The earth's body consists of layers after layers of rocks and other structural materials of varying density and strength, with each inner layer forming a base and support for its immediate outer layer, and this progression continues till we reach the outer surface of the earth which would obviously collapse if the earth were not supported by these inner rings that form the different strata of the earth's structure. It is like the case of a hollow ball which cannot survive any external pressure and beating as compared to a solid ball which would not collapse despite it being punched and hammered or pressed in from the outside.

That is, the inner-most core of this ball-like structure consists of the Anand Maye Kosh and the consciousness that gives it its life is called the Anand Maye Atma. This central core is surrounded by the Vigyan Maye Kosh and the consciousness that lends it its vitality and life is called the Vigyan Maye Atma. This applies to the other layers also—viz. the Mano Maye Atma corresponding to the Mano Maye Kosh surrounds this Vigyan Maye Atma and is surrounded by the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh; and finally the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh sits comfortably upon this Pran Maye Kosh.

This verse implies that all the forms of the Atma as enumerated in these verses are basically the same consciousness performing different functions in these individual forms and therefore there is no difference between them. The different layers envisaged are hypothetical entities delineated for the purposes of understanding of how the creation works but refer to the same consciousness that prevails throughout the entire being of the individual. No one form of the Atma can be sheared off from the other if the individual is expected to survive as a living individual entity. For example, it is impractical to extract the mind and let the intellect function, or to shear off the external covering of the body called the Anna Maye Kosh and expect the other parts of the body to live and survive. Each unit depends upon the other.

The body of the creature has been crafted by the supreme creator most intelligently and wisely. His expertise in craftsmanship and his prudence is evident when we examine what precautions he took to protect the Atma or the 'true self' of the creature. In order to protect the subtle Atma which is the most delicate and sublime entity in creation from being harmed, he protected it with a five-tier security mechanism consisting of these five Koshas. Even if one protective ring got somehow damaged, the Atma would still have the other rings for its protection. For instance, even if the eye fails, the consciousness is not much affected because the other organs gear up to replace this shortfall and become more alert, active and diligent. Even if the body is paralyzed and unable to move, all the internal organs work smoothly to protect life in it. A mad man whose mind is not under control or is malfunctioning can still survive and live a long life just like a stupid fool who has no intellect and its wisdom. Again, even though the man is most unhappy and disgusted in life indicating the absence of a properly-tuned Anand Maye Kosha, he would still live on and on showing that the Atma is protected by the other sheaths in the absence of cooperation from the Anand Maye Kosh which has malfunctioned.

In this context it is pertinent to note that a wise and enlightened man in terms of metaphysics is one who is 'self realised', i.e. who has 'realised' his 'true self' by his own efforts. In other words, he has acquainted himself with the truthful entity known as the Atma or pure consciousness living in a house having these five structural walls called the Koshas. The world erroneously recognises the body consisting of these five Koshas as the gentleman concerned, but it is a grave misconception, because the house cannot be the same as its inhabitant. Here the inhabitant is the Atma, and the house is the five-layered body.]

"Verse no. 26 = The Anand Maye Atma representing the bliss sheath surrounds the innermost core called the pure consciousness or the Atma representing the supreme Brahm that is an all-pervading and universal entity residing in the bosom of all the living beings as their inner self or inner being. There is no other thing present inside this Brahm, and so the latter is deemed to be the ultimate core of all that exists. It is like the hidden and mysterious power present inside a seed that enables it to create a tree virtually from nothing (26).

[Note—The individual creature derives its physical form and shape with the help of the Anna Maye Kosh or the external gross body; its energy, vitality, stamina and strength from the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital winds which pump in air and fresh energy into the body and drains out toxic waste from it and generally help the various organs of the body to perform their respective duties; its desires and wishes and aspirations from the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath because it is the mind that makes all hopes and desires besides creating this world of material objects and the need to enjoy them; its higher level of intellectual achievements through the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and its ultimate bliss through the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. Since these functions are manifestations of the various aspects of creation, they are called the different forms of the same Atma because all that lives is nothing but the Atma. The different names assigned to the Atma are only because it performs different functions.]"

It is important to note the fine difference between the terms 'mind' and 'intellects' and their relation with the 'Mana' as used in the Upanishads.

The 'Intellect' is the active and conscious aspect the mind that is objective, dynamic, understanding, reasoning, logical, thinking and analytical. It controls the organs of perception (eyes: seeing, ears: hearing, tongue: tasting, nose: smelling, skin: feeling) and action (mouth: speaking, hands: doing deeds, legs: going places, anus: excretion, genitals: sexual pleasures) of the body.

In the scriptures, this intellectual mind is called 'Buddhi'. This 'intellect' is however not independently functioning, for it is influenced by other factors or aspects of the mind—which are subtle in nature. This is the 'sub-conscious mind'.

Now, the word 'Mind' in metaphysical perspective has a subtler aspect as well—and it is the 'sub-conscious mind'. This is because the comprehensive meaning of Mind includes the active aspect of the 'intellect' alongside the passive aspect known as the 'sub-conscious'. The 'sub-conscious' is the passive mind which controls subtle thoughts or thinking processes, emotions, sentiments, nature, habits, temperaments and other inherent virtues and qualities of the mind that are natural to a creature and determines how he would interpret a given set of inputs from the external world with his intellect.

This 'passive sub-conscious' works in coordination with the 'active intellect' to function as a wholesome entity called the 'mind' in common parlance; both act in a tango, but the former has a great say in how the latter works and reacts to the stimuli received from the world. Sometimes

they are in sync, and sometimes opposed.

For instance, when a person steals anything, his sub-conscious says it is wrong, but his conscious mind is unable to resist the temptation. Now, how that person reacts determines his good or bad future. If he obeys his sub-conscious, which is his 'subtle mind', he hears the voice of the 'soul' and is a righteous man, and if he hears the command of the 'gross mind' which is influenced by the temptations arising out of the need of the gross organs of the body, he is a 'worldly man' who is driven by unrighteousness.

Then what happens? When his soul or sub-conscious nudges him that what he thinks is wrong, he can either suppress it, or he can comply.

Take another instance: Suppose a man had once taken some medicine that had caused a severe reaction in his body. A long time later he falls sick again, and the doctor tells him that it is extremely urgent to take that medicine to tide over his emergency. Now what happens? His sub-conscious mind warns him not to take this medicine, but his intellect says that may be that medicine had harmed him then but is necessary for him now, and the doctor is an expert and shouldn't be wrong. In this situation, the man may or may not use the medicine, and may ask the doctor for a substitute. This example shows how the sub-conscious influences the intellect and the resultant composite functioning of the mind of an individual.

Besides these two aspects of the mind, there is one other term—'Mana'. It is a combination of the mind and the heart. This term is versatile and often it is applied to the mind only. A person says that this thing appeals to my 'Mana': he means that it is attractive for his heart as well as his mind. Another instance: a teacher tells a student to 'study a subject with his Mana'—here he means 'put your heart and mind in your studies', for otherwise you would get distracted. If the heart does not like the subject being studied, it would divert the student's focus to another thing for which the heart has a liking, for instance music. This will cause lack in concentration of the mind.

The 'Atma' lives in the heart, while the 'intellect' lives in the mind. Since the Atma or the 'consciousness' that resides in the body of a creature is a subtle entity like the 'sub-conscious' aspect of the mind, they usually work in tandem. The state of transcendental existence where the creature attains extreme bliss is in the realm of the 'consciousness'. This bliss is not pleasure of the senses which the intellect can discern through the medium of the sense organs of the body, but it is a state of beatitude and blessedness that affects the heart and the sub-conscious mind.

One more instance of the inter-relationship of the 'mind' and the 'intellect' which will clear the concept further. Suppose a man finds some thousand dollar bills lying unclaimed on the ground while walking on a street. He is a poor man and in need of funds. Now, the 'intellect' or the conscious aspect of the mind will immediately motivate him to pick it up, for it is 'god-sent' and he needs money also. Further, he is not stealing as he found it by chance. But his 'sub-conscious'

mind—which is the 'voice of the Atma'—will tell him that one should only accept the fruits of his efforts or labour, and not something that comes for free—because these thousand dollar bills belonged to some one else, and that person will now be sorry and lamenting for its lose. In other words, this money is spoilt by someone's grief and pain, and if I pick it up and buy some material good with it, it will be at the cost of someone's pain and sweat of his labour which ought rightly should belong to him.

In this tussle, the intellect will continue to prod this man that such thoughts are nonsense, and everyone who becomes rich has not merely relied on the labour of his body or effort of his mind, and all of them are enjoying life and comforts of the world. The Atma says that if he desires to pick up this money and can't resist the temptation, then at least he should make a percentage of it as charity. But the intellect shoos the 'conscience' away; the greed overcomes the man and he goes on a spending spree with this ill-gotten and free money. To justify his act, he tells himself that it is 'god-sent', but he forgets that someone else may have been going to purchase medicines or other essentials with this money and lost it by misfortune, and now he would be in sore condition. The intellect tells him—'you are a too moral a fellow, and it is such people who suffer'.

Now, if the man hears the 'intellect' and subdues the call of the Atma, he picks up the thousand dollars and spends them on material things of the world which may give him some transient comfort and joy, but it will be at the cost of his Atma's peace, for his sub-conscious will continue to prick him. He will become lazy and his greed would increase. He will eye other people's money, and think that 'why not enjoy life, and how does it matter if some rich fatty person's bulging wallet is made a bit thin, for this person won't even know that he is short of a few dollars, which however he will spend on indulgences nonetheless; so why not me who do not have this or that material thing which this man throws away like dirt'.

So the vicious cycle starts; and the Atma goes further and further downhill.

Remember: The body of a living being is a complex entity, and all its parts work together in sync in a complex system to keep him in fine fetter, and they do not exist in isolation from one another.

Which aspect or part or facet dominates a person determines his qualities, personality and character, as well as his responses and reactions.

(2) The body of the living being consists of Bhuts, Dhaatus, Tattvas etc.:--

To understand this phenomenon we will now take a peep in this estoric field of creation in the context of modern science.

It is said that the body of all living beings is made of 5 Bhuts, 7 Dhaatus, and 13 as well as 23 Tattvas depending upon how these Tattvas are delineated. Now, let us examine this concept in detail:—

The gross body can be studied at various levels depending upon the classification used to study its consititution and structure. The structural elements are variously called the Bhuts, the Dhaatus and the Tattvas.

(a) The *Primary level* of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts'. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1-2 and 5-6 describe in detail how these five elements developed into the complex structure of the body as its core. This is the study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts[1].

[Note—[1]The Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 1 says 'This gross body of the creature is a combination of the five basic elements in creation called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts' such as earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky).

The solid, thicker, denser and heavier part of the body is made up of the earth element. [For example, the bones, skin, nails, hairs etc.]

The fluid part is made up of the water element. [For example, blood, lymph, semen, mucous, urine, semi-solid stool etc.] The heat and warmth in the living body is the fire element. [A dead body is ice-cold, and since the fire element is missing in such a body, it cannot live and is deemed to be lifeless.]

The constant movement and restlessness that is so typical of any living organism is a manifestation of the air or wind element. [This movement may not be externally visible, but is always there in some form or the other. For example, the heart continues to beat and the blood flows uninterruptedly even while a man sleeps; all the internal organs such as the kidneys, lungs, intestines, brain etc. continue to function during this state though externally there is no activity. Even immobile forms of living creation such a plants continue their activities day and night without resting for a moment. In fact, life and movement are synonymous with each other; only a dead body shows no movement in the real sense.]

The hollow part of the body (such as the gross space between the organs and the finer space between its cells and even inside the cell between its constituent parts, the pores on the skin, the hollow of the mouth etc.) is made up of the sky or space element'. Its verse no. 2 says 'The five sense organs of perception are called 'Gyan Indris', such as ears etc. (the others being eyes, nose, tongue and skin).

The ears represent the sky element; the ears are the manifestations of the sky element. [The ears have the function of hearing, but it can hear only if the sound reaches it. Sound would need open space and an ethereal medium to travel and reach the ear because it does so in the form of waves. That is why the ears turn towards the direction in the sky from where the sound comes. The ears are like the modern day radar that is made to turn and rotate in order to optimize the reception of sound. That is why we cannot hear anything if there is a solid obstruction between the origin of sound and the

ears.]

The skin represents the air element; the skin is the manifestation of the air or wind element. [The skin has the function of feeling the sense of touch. When a soft breeze blows over our skin it can immediately feel being subtly and softly massaged by it. The excellent ability of the skin to exhibit the sense of feel in its subtlest form is manifested when it can feel the air or wind blowing over it, because this air or wind is not physically seen. This feeling and sensation is the exclusively domain of the skin, for the ears, eyes, nose and the tongue can't do so.]

The eyes represent the fire element; the eyes are the manifestations of the fire element. [The can see anything only if it is lighted, and in there is light in the general surrounding area; it cannot see anything in dark. The fire element has light as one of its integral characteristic feature—where there is a fire burning, there would be light. That is why a fire is lit in the forest to ward off wild animals because they are scared by its light and leaping flames. The fire element has heat and energy inherent in it too, and the eyes can perceive the existence of anything if the fire element manifests itself even in its non-visible form as heat and energy as is evident from modern day night-vision instruments such as goggles etc. which precisely exploit this phenomenon of the ability of the eye to perceive the existence of anything if there are subtle components of fire element present in the thing viewed. In the absence of the light in the visible spectrum, the eye utilizes the subtler components of fire, such as heat and energy, to perceive things. Similarly, modern day weapons which have so-called smart electronic eyes can home on to their targets relying upon heat emanating form it.]

The tongue represents the water element; the tongue is the manifestation of the water element. [The tongue can taste anything only when the enzymes of taste present in the saliva dissolve the chemicals present in the food tasted. Suppose a piece of iron is put on the tongue. Would it enjoy its taste as much as it longs for a delicious sweet dish? This is because the water element is not present in sufficient quantity in the solid iron that can enable the enzymes of the saliva to dissolve them. Even uncooked and raw food does not appeal to the tongue for this precise reason—the chemicals have not sufficiently dissolved in water to interact with the enzymes of taste. Until the water has softened the food, the latter cannot be gulped; it would get stuck either in the mouth or in the throat.]

The nose represents the earth element; the nose is the manifestation of the earth element. [The nose has the main function of smelling, and smell has its origin in anything that is gross and that has an affinity to the earth by preferring to be near it. This is evident from the fact that there is no smell in outer space; we smell things only when we land on the earth. Even on earth, places that are symbolic of life and fertility, such as green and moist areas rich is fauna and flora give out a fragrance, whether likable or not, but dry and parched areas of the same earth, such as arid deserts and snow covered mountains do not harbour smell. A garden is full of fragrances and the sweet aroma of fruits and fragrances of its flowers can spread over large areas in the surrounding place, even carried to far distances by the wind, but if we were to rise above the surface of the earth, say in a hot air balloon, the smells would not be smelt by us. In

other words, smell has a direct affinity to earth.]

The respective senses of perceptions of these sense organs are word (sound—pertaining to the organ of ear), touch (feeling—pertaining to the organ of skin), form and shape (sight—pertaining to the organ of ear), the various genres of taste (pertaining to the organ of tongue), and smell (both the sweet and the foul—pertaining to the organ of nose).

All these perceptions and their organs have their origin in the five basic elements of creation, called the 'Panch Maha Bhuts''.

Its verse no. 5 says—'The bones, skin, veins and other tubular ducts of the body, the hairs and flesh—these are manifestations of the earth element. They have been made from the earth element.

The urine, mucous, blood, sperms and semen, sweat—these are manifestations of the water element. They have been made from the water element. [That is, all things that have a fluid dimension must have water element inherent in them.]

Hunger, thirst, laziness and indolence*, attractions and passions#, and sexual activity—these are manifestations of the fire element. They have been moulded out of the fire element. [*This is evident during very hot seasons when one becomes lethargic and dozes off to sleep. #That is why we say that certain passionate things are done 'in the heat of the moment'.]

To expand, to run and move, to walk, to fly, the movement of the eyelids etc. — these are manifestations of the air or wind element. They have been crafted out of the air or wind element. [This is because the air or wind element is always mobile; it cannot remain static.]

Kaam (lust, yearnings and worldly desires), Krodh (anger, wrathfulness), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Bhaya (fear and consternation) etc.—these are manifestations of the sky element. They have been made from the sky element. [The symbolism here is obvious. All these qualities have no limits; they are as endless as the sky. They cannot be precisely defined and delineated like the vast sky.]'

Its verse no. 6 says—'Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight), taste and smell—these are the activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the earth element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight) and taste—these are the activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the water element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), and shape and form (sight)—these are the activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the fire element.

Word (hearing, sound) and touch (feeling)—these are the activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the air or wind element.

And word (hearing and sound) is the only one activity which is described as the characteristic virtue displayed by the sky element'.]

(a) (ii) The next level would the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye

Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaraayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The *secondary level* of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.]

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

(4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight 'Vikaars' (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the *tertiary level*. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakarans which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to 3 + 6 = 9. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The *7 Dhaatus*—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven Dhaatus. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra

(semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) *The body of a creature as a microcosm of the whole creation*—This fact has been elaborately described in *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its verse no. 2; and *Shaarirako Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The body of a living being, the creature or the Jiva, is divided into three broad parts from the metaphysical perspective—viz. the 'gross body' which consists of the organs of perception and action, the 'subtle body' consisting of the mind and intellect complex, and the 'causal body' which harbours the Atma, the pure consciousness that is the 'cause' of the existence of the body, and by extension of the gross world in which this body lives and with which it interacts.

The Sense Organs of the body—There are five organs of perceptions and five functions that the body performs. These are as follows—(i) the five organs of perceptions are skin, ear, nose, eye and tongue, and their respective functions, called Tanmatras, are touch, hear, smell, sight, and taste; the five organs of action are hands, legs, mouth, genitals, excretory organs and their functions are to catch, move, eat and speak, to reproduce and excrete.

The five sense perceptions of the body pertain to the five sense organs as follows—perception of sight pertains to the organ of the eye, perception of smell pertains to the organ known as the nose, perception of sound pertains to the organ known as the ear, perception of taste pertains to the organ known as the tongue, and perception of feeling anything or touch pertains to the organ known as the skin.

Therefore, the things that are the objects of these five perceptions are the objects that have a form and colour which can be seen, the things that emanate some smell or fragrance which can be smelt, things that emanate sound and the sound itself such as music and the words spoken by a wise teacher, things that have a taste and can be tasted and then liked or disliked, and objects that can be touched and felt respectively.

These ten sense organs referred above actually are part of the gross, physical body. Their inclusion in the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect is due to the fact that the mind-intellect complex directly controls them as do the five Prans which infuse these otherwise inert entities with life. The five vital winds which control the various functions of the body and infuse it with the all-important characteristic called 'life' which makes the otherwise fundamentally lifeless, inane and inert gross body into a conscious entity able to exhibit all the characteristics of life and even that of the Atma so much so that it is oftentimes mistaken to be the true identity of a creature instead of the Atma which is in reality is the true identity. Since the vital winds are invisible as the mind and intellect, as well as the vital functions and perceptions, they are also

treated as part of the subtle body of the creature.

Paingalo-panishad belonging to the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 1-12, and Canto 2, verse no. 1-5 elaborately describes how the various sense organs of the creature were created by the superme creator at the time of creation.

The patron Gods of the organs have been described in Paingalo-panishad Canto 2, verse 3 as follows—"The presiding deities of the various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Arka (the Water God), Pracheta (one of the ancient Prajapatis, the care-takers of the creation according to the Purans), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (the junior Gods who help Indra to carry on his functions), Mritu (the death God or Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Vishnu (the sustainer), the four-headed Lord (Brahma the creator), and Shiva (the concluder of creation).

The 17 subtle/deemed organs of the body—The seventeen subtle functions that the various units of the body perform are deemed to be the subtle organs of the body. They are deemed to be the following—the mind which receives information and inputs from the external world, + the intellect which analyses received information + the five sense organs that perceive (e.g. the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the nose that smells, the skin that feels, the tongue that tastes) + the five sense organs that act (the hand that receives, the leg that moves, the mouth that talks and eats, the excretory organs that expel, and the genitals that reproduce) + the five vital wind forces of life called the vital Prans (i.e. the breath known as Pran, and other chief forms of vital winds known as Apaan, Samaan, Udaan and Vyan) = seventeen.

The ten sense organs referred above actually are part of the gross, physical body. Their inclusion as part of the subtle body consisting of the mind and intellect is due to the fact that the mind-intellect complex directly controls them as do the five Prans which infuse these otherwise inert entities with life. The various functions that the five organs of perception and five organs of action perform are due to the combined efforts of the mind, the intellect and the Prans which represent the subtle aspect of the body of the creature.

The five vital wind forces referred above are the following—(a) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (b) Apaan, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (c) Samaan, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (d) Udaan, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (e) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it controls the functioning of the other winds.

The 14 deemed subtle organs of the body—The fourteen organs or instruments of the body by which the creature perceives the external world in which it lives are the following—

one Mana or the faculty of the mind, one Buddhi or the faculty of the intellect, one Chitta or the faculty of the memory, the sub-conscious mind, and the power to focus and fix attention, one Ahankar or the sense of pride in the body and its achievements as well as its stupendous abilities, five organs of perceptions such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive.

Refer *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 2 in this context which says that these fourteen organs are like the fourteen pillars that support the creature from all sides.

The same *Naradparivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 3 describes the functions of these fourteen instruments of the body that work under the overall supervision and control of the Antahakaran (the inner self) having four aspects. To quote—"Now, the functions of the fourteen instruments of the body (refer verse no. 2) that work under the overall control and supervision of the four aspects of the Antahakarans (the inner self) that consist of the Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankar (ego, pride) are being described.

The main function of the eye is to create in a creature awareness of and attraction for visual things in this world that have a charming countenance. The ear has the function of making sounds audible for the creature and making him aware of the existence of words and all other forms of sound. The tongue has the function of tasting and making a creature aware of the various shades of taste that exist in this world. The nose has the function of smell and making the creature aware of different types of smells that exist in this world. The faculty of speech located in the mouth has the function of speaking and enabling the creature to express himself. The hand has the function of accepting or receiving anything, to give it to someone else, or to lift it and take it to some other place. The function of the leg is to walk and carry the creature's body to different places. The anus has the function of eliminating waste from the body. The genitals have the function of recreating and its associated sexual and sensual pleasures. The function of feeling and touching is carried out by the skin. [These are the gross components of the body.]

[Now the subtle components are being discussed.] The function of the Mana (mind) is to accept the sensory inputs fed in by the sense organs of the gross body as outlined above, and then consult the Buddhi (intellect aspect of the brain) so as to intelligently interpret these inputs given by the various gross organs of the body and then make proper and judicious decisions, and give effect to them so that these instruments can carry out their functions in an organized and auspicious way. The Chitta (the sub-conscious, the memory) helps to keep him conscious and internally aware and updated about the happenings, collecting data for future reference and generally acting as the quick-referral library for the creature. Finally, the component of Ahankar (ego, pride) makes the creature have a sense of individuality, and having an independent existence and personality."

The 7 organs of the body—These have been cited in Nrisingh Puravatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 5 without naming them. By inference, they refer to the following—the five Prans (Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udan and Vyan) + the mind + the intellect = 7.

It might also refer to the seven states of consciousness as described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos. 8-20 of Sam Veda tradition. Briefly they are the following—(i) 'Beej Jagrat' (the elementary waking state of consciousness), (ii) 'Jagrat' (or normal waking state of consciousness), (iii) 'Maha Jagrat' (or a greater waking state), (iv) 'Jagrat Swapna' (or a state in which a person is mislead to erroneously believe in anything while he is wide awake in this world; literally meaning to 'day dream', or dream of imaginary thinks while a man is wide awake), (v) 'Swapna' (or a dreaming state of consciousness), (vi) 'Swapna-Jagrat' (or a state when a person's dreams last long enough to influence him and he lives in his dreams so much so that they affect his mind while he is awake), (vii) 'Sushupta' (or the deep sleep state of consciousness).

From the perspective of metaphysics, the various aspects or components of the subtle body of a creature have been described in detail in Atharva Veda's Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 2. Now, let us examine what this Upanishad says—"The aspect of the body that remains after its gross components are eliminated is called the subtle body, and it is represented by Gyan (i.e. mind and intellect, because these are the instruments by which a man acquires Gyan or knowledge to become wise, learned and enlightened).

Vairagya (renunciation) is the soul of this body. [True knowledge instils renunciation in a man for he has now realised the deluding, transient, entrapping and artificial nature of this material world and its eqaually illusive charms. He begins to distance himself from it because he had become disillusioned by it. If true Gyan or enlightenment, wisdom and learning cannot inspire Vairagya, or true renunciation and detachment in a man, then he cannot be said to have acquired true Gyan. If he says that he has this virtue of Gyan in him, he is only deceiving himself and others.]

Sham and Dam (self restraint of the mind and body) are its two symbolic eyes. [That is, a wise man sees everything with restraint and with self control of natural urges.]

Its symbolic mouth is a completely cleansed Mana (mind). [A creature accepts things to eat by its mouth, and this food helps to nourish the rest of the body. In the present context, a wise and discriminating mind would accept only noble thoughts and ideas, and exclude everything that is unworthy to be accepted, that is ignoble, unholy, lowly and avoidable. This input would obviously have an all-round positive effect on the creature's well being and overall personality. Positive thoughts are always beneficial because they create positive energy fields. A system nourished by things positively charged would naturally be superior and better placed than those that are sustained by evil and negatively charged energy. Similarly, a creature speaks by its mouth; the mouth is the 'spokesman of the inner thoughts of the creature'. When the mind is holy and cleansed of all impurities, its thoughts would also be concurrently holy and pure. This would be reflected by what a man says, what he thinks, what he does, and how he behaves.]

The Buddhi or intellect is its special Kalaa or exclusive quality or virtue that distinguishes it from others. [Like the case of a man having great practical intelligence, natural wisdom and prudence inspite of him being not formally educated, or even when he is learned in the letters

his literal knowledge would be useless unless he is endowed with the gift of prudence, intelligence and wisdom, the subtle body that has a sharp Buddhi (intellect) along with the Mana (mind) that is fine-tuned and wise is indeed distinguished and set apart from others.]

This subtle body has twenty-five components or parts or organs called the Tattwas (elements), and they are the following—the five perceptions (of smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch), the five faculties of action (accepting, going, speaking, sensual or sexual awareness and the desire to excrete or eliminate waste), the five Prans (i.e. the vital winds or airs that sustain life inside the body—Pran or breath, Apaan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan), the five objects of perception (things seen, things heard, things smelt, things tasted and things felt), the four Antahakarans (i.e. the four aspects of the inner self which are Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious, and Ahankar or ego), and one un-manifest Prakriti (or the latent, hidden but inherent nature and temperament of a creature). [Refer also to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 6 of Sam Veda tradition.]

The overall gross body of a creature consisting of the five Maha Bhuts (elements such as sky, air, fire, water and earth) has five states of existence—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or deep sleep state, the Turiya or post Sushupta state that is bordering on the transcendental and deep sleep state, and Turiyatit or post Turiya state of permanent transcendental existence.

The four symbolic limbs of the body are the following—Karma or deeds done, Bhakti or devotion for one's noble aim in life as well as submission to the Lord, Gyan or truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment, and Vairagya or renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference towards all material things and falsehoods of the world.

Another interpretation is that the four states of existence of consciousness, viz, the Jagrat, the Swapna, the Sushupta and Turiya are the four symbolic limbs of the body.

The fourteen organs or instruments of the body (refer verse no. 3 of this Canto 6) by which the creature perceives the external world in which it lives are the following—one Mana or the faculty of the mind, one Buddhi or the faculty of the intellect, one Chitta or the faculty of the memory, the sub-conscious mind, and the power to focus and fix attention, one Ahankar or the sense of pride in the body and its achievements as well as its stupendous abilities (which enables the gross body to become agile and active to prove that it is strong, able, competent, energetic and muscular enough to achieve tough and the most daunting of tasks), five organs of perceptions such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive. These organs or instruments are like the pillars that support the creature's existence in this world. It is with the aid of these fourteen components or parts the edifice of the world is accepted and known by the living being.

In this prevailing situation, a wise ascetic is he who acts like an expert boatman who can extricate the boat that has been trapped in a swamp and manoeuvre it to safety. In other words, a wise ascetic should overcome all spiritual obstacles and expertly take the boat representing his life across this endless world of delusions, entrapments, miseries and temptations, a world which is like an ocean, and reach the other shore symbolising emancipation and salvation

for his soul. He must act like an expert elephant tamer who can control even a rogue elephant with dexterity, and force it to go along the desired path.

Hence, a wise and enlightened man who is well established in Gyan (or truthful knowledge of the reality of existence) must be convinced that whatever that exists besides his pure consciousness called the Atma is deluding, false and deceptive, and therefore he exclaims 'Aham Brahmasmi' or 'I am Brahm'. [This is because Brahm is the only universal, unequivocal, quintessential and irrefutable 'truth' in creation, and the Atma, being pure consciousness, is an embodiment or a personification of this 'truth'. How can one deny one's own existence? It may be difficult to visualise or think about the concept of 'pain' or 'enjoyment', for instance, when it is felt by someone else, but how can one deny this feeling when he personally feels it, when he experiences it first hand? Likewise, if may be difficult to visualise the abstract concept of the Absolute Truth and Consciousness as being one's truthful form known as the 'self', that the 'Truth' is not the visible gross body but something extremely subtle and sublime, and that this 'Truth' is known as the Atma which is all-pervading, universal and all-encompassing entity in the sense that it is present in equal intensity in all living beings of whatever denomination or in whatever form of the visible gross body they have. The realisation of this 'Truth' provides extreme bliss, contentedness, fulfilment and ecstasy. A person may not be easily convinced of this 'Truth' by merely reading the scriptures, but how can someone neglect it when he witnesses this 'Truth' first hand by meditating and concentrating his faculties on searching it out, and then personally experiencing the sublime quality of bliss obtained by this realisation?]

Having a firm conviction and sound belief that there is nothing worth knowing spiritually other than one's own self called the Atma, he becomes liberated and roams around like a free man. He is called a 'Jivan Mukta'—i.e. he is a person who attains freedom from all fetters of ignorance and delusions vis-à-vis the world and the body that tie down an ordinary creature to them, and consequentially he is deemed to be free even though he lives in the same gross world and has a physical gross body.

A Parivrajak who lives in the aforesaid manner is fulfilled and accomplished. He must desist from saying that he is not Brahm, because that would be speaking a lie. On the other hand, he must always assert that 'I am Brahm'. [Foolish people would think that he is mad, is an impostor who is boasting about his exalted spiritual stature, but in fact he is honestly and sincerely speaking the truth.]

An acclaimed and successful Sanyasi passes through the three states of existence such as Jagrat (waking), Swapna (dreaming) and Sushupta (deep sleep) to reach the Turiya state which acts as a stepping stone to the final transcendental state of Turiyatit (2)."

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3 describes in detail the various components of the body of the creature and their respective functions. Now let us examine what it has to say--"Now, the functions of the fourteen instruments of the body that work under the overall control and supervision of the four aspects of the Antahakarans (the inner self) that consist of the Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankar (ego, pride) are being described.

The main function of the eye is to create in a creature awareness of and attraction for visual things in this world that have a charming countenance or external features. The ear has the function of making sounds audible for the creature and making him aware of the existence of words and all other forms of sound that imply the presence of life in the surrounding world (because lifeless and inert entities do not emit sound, and dead creatures do not speak). The tongue has the function of tasting and making a creature aware of the various shades of taste that exist in this world. The nose has the function of smell and making the creature aware of different types of smells that exist in this world. The faculty of speech located in the mouth has the function of speaking and enabling the creature to express himself. The hand has the function of accepting or receiving anything, to give it to someone else, or to lift it and take it to some other place. The function of the leg is to walk and carry the creature's body to different places. The anus has the function of eliminating waste from the body. The genitals have the function of recreating and its associated sexual and sensual pleasures. The function of feeling and touching is carried out by the skin. [These are the gross components of the body.]

[Now the subtle components are being discussed.] The function of the Mana (mind) is to accept the sensory inputs fed in by the sense organs of the gross body as outlined above, and then consult the Buddhi (intellect aspect of the brain) so as to intelligently interpret these inputs given by the various gross organs of the body and then make proper and judicious decisions, and give effect to them so that these instruments can carry out their functions in an organised and auspicious way. The Chitta (the sub-conscious, the memory) helps to keep him conscious and internally aware and updated about the happenings, collecting data and storing them for future retrival and reference, and generally acting as the quick-referral library for the creature. Finally, the component of Ahankar (ego, pride) makes the creature have a sense of individuality, and a feeling of having an independent existence and personality."

Inside the gross body is a subtle heart which is like a lotus having eight petals. The Jiva or the 'true self' of the creature, i.e. his 'pure consciousness or self', resides in this lotus like heart. This Jiva assumes different forms depending upon the perspective with which it is viewed.

When this Jiva (the Atma or consciousness) living inside this lotus wanders or moves around the eastern petal, it develops a tendency for doing auspicious things. When it turns towards the south-east direction, it develops a tendency of laziness, and feels drowsy and lethargic. When it turns towards the south direction, it develops a tendency of cruelty and lack of compassion. When it turns towards the south-west direction, it develops a tendency for auspicious and correct thinking. When it turns towards the western direction, it develops a tendency of remaining engrossed in sports, plays, actions and other such worldly deeds and activities that need physical effort. When it turns towards the north-west direction, its intellect begins to swerve towards nobler ideas and higher goals of life. When it turns towards the north direction, it experiences profound calmness and develops peace of mind. When it turns towards the north-east direction, it acquires eclectic wisdom and enlightenment. When it remains established in the center of the lotus in its thalamus, it develops great Vairagya or a tendency for renunciation and detachment. And when it enters the tendril of the lotus, the creature becomes

aware of its pure conscious form known as the Atma.

In this above way, when a wise ascetic becomes aware of this shoot (tendril) from which the lotus flower has emerged and which is the root cause of his existence as an individual person, he is said to be enlightened. He would have become aware of the pure consciousness called the Atma or soul that is the very essence and at the root cause of his being.

(f) The *structure of the body* as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C_6H_6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved.

Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human

species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The metaphysical concept of Bhuts, Tattvas and Dhaatus as being the primary or secondary or tertiary building blocks of creation and their contribution in the process of creation seems to be too abstract to be a reality, but if we relate them to our modern knowledge of chemistry they become very easy to understand, very rational and very evidently possible.

All the elements in existence have been classified into a Periodic Table in chemistry, called the 'Mendeleyev Periodic Table of Elements'. The elements are arranged in it based on their atomic weight (the average mass of a chemical element's atom) or atomic number (the number of protons in the atom of a chemical element's nucleus). The one with atomic number 1 is at the top of the list, and currently there are said to be 116 elements in the list. The increase of atomic number would be like increase in the weight of that element which we can liken to increasing degree of grossness and decreasing degree of subtlety in metaphysics.

The orderliness in Nature can be well gauged from the fact that all the elements behave in a fixed, pre-destined and pre-determinable manner depending upon their place in the table. Those in the same group or column show similar chemical behaviour.

The primary elements are those that have atomic numbers 1 (hydrogen) to 83 (bismuth). The secondary elements would be those having atomic number 84 onwards till 92 (uranium).

The tertiary elements would be the ones having atomic numbers above 93 and till 110, and by later additions to 116. These tertiary elements are the trans-uranium elements (i.e. those with atomic numbers higher than 92) and all of them have been produced in the laboratory. This phenomenon is similar to the concept of evolution of newer Tattvas and Dhaatus, newer forms of Kalaas and Gunas that kept on developing by mutations of the primary and secondary elements.

These naturally occurring elements exist in varying forms. For instance, eleven are in the form of gases (hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, fluorine, chlorine, and the six noble gases—helium, neon, argon, krypton, xenon and radon). Two are in liquid form (bromine and mercury). The rest are solids of varying textures and forms. Again this is not enough—for we have some as hard solids (copper, iron), some as soft and not so hard solids (lead), some as viscous fluids (mercury), some as waxy non-metallic elements (phosphorus), some as solid non-metallic elements (sulphur), some that are stable (elements having atomic number 1-83) and others that undergo constant decay and destruction over a period of time, called their 'half lives', e.g. those with atomic number 83 to 92, and then still others that are synthetic such as those having atomic number 93-116 in the present list of the Periodic Table.

Some elements are permanent such as the ones having atomic number 1 (hydrogen) - 83 (bismuth), while those above it have a transient life, called radioactive elements. Some elements are abundantly available such as carbon, while some are precious because of their rarity such as silver and gold, while still other are still rarer and present only in trace, called the trace elements such as selenium, magnesium, potassium etc.

Then there are the 'isotopes' of the same element, i.e. elements having different number of neutrons but the same number of protons in their nucleus and hence the same number of electrons in their shells, thereby showing the same basic chemical behaviour—e.g. tin (which has an astounding 10 isotopes) and carbon (with numerous isotopes).

This single entity 'carbon' proves how the supreme creator was versatile and astoundingly creative when he set about for the mammoth task of creation. The atomic number of carbon is 6; it has many isotopes of which carbon-12 and carbon-13 are said to be stable, while carbon-14 is said to the most stable amongst its radioactive isotopes because it has a half-life of 5730 years approx. Carbon exists in many natural forms and has four known allotropes—e.g. diamond, graphite, carbon black (coal, coke and charcoal) and fullerenes (hollow cage molecules). Carbon is the most versatile of all elements in creation and it forms more chemical compounds that all the other elements taken together, giving rise to an entire branch of chemistry devoted to it called the organic chemistry. There are millions of known carbon products.

This ubiquitous carbon can be regarded as the most important, most handy, most adaptable, very flexible and highly useful tool in the hands of the cosmic creator which helped him not only in creation but for the planning for its future upkeep, because all the essential ingredients needed to sustain life in this living world are carbon-based. Carbon is the core of proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, nucleic acids—all essential chemical ingredients needed to

sustain life and make it viable, besides in the form of hydrocarbons found in coal, petroleum and natural gases which would be needed for the upcoming creation for its daily needs. It exists in the earth's crust as carbonate rocks as well as dissolved in the ocean.

Some molecules of compounds are as simple as water molecule having two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen (both gases), then a slightly higher level of combination results in the formation of different salts. These salts are formed when the hydrogen of an acid is replaced by a metal or its equivalent—the most common from of salt is the table salt (sodium chloride), and other common names which are more complex such as sodium bicarbonate, silver nitrate, calcium carbonate etc.

The carbon chemistry opens a mammoth vista of chemical compounds such as ketones and aldehydes, formaldehydes and resins, simple and complex polymers etc.

The general idea of the above narration is that if such a variety is possible in this world which has a physical limitation of its resources and their application, one can well imagine what astounding possibilities can exist when we consider the unimaginable vastness of this creation in which the known world in which we live is but like a speck of dust or sand on a beach by the ocean. So the authenticity and truthfulness of the manner the Upanishads speak about this creation and its Bhuts, Dhaatus, Tattvas and Kalaas should never be doubted. That we do not understand anything is no proof of its non-existence or veracity; it is the limit of human knowledge and mind that things which are beyond his comprehension or imagination seem absurd to him. The same man thousands of years ago would not have known chemistry as it is understood today, and suppose the present concepts were explained to him then by some wise man who would have been fortunate enough to have the deep insight and a sharp analytical mind to know or interpret certain event or observations in the context of science and then had tried to explain his observations to those primitive societies, he would have been ridiculed, irrational and thought to be outright mad. But with the benefit of hindsight and introspection we would now realise that what he had taught then was indeed the truth, albeit spoken in a language in vogue at that remote point of time which is now incomprehensible for us, and therefore creating skepticism in modern times.

(3) The States of Existence:- The Atma or the soul which is pure consciousness and true self of the creature has many states of existence according to metaphysics—e.g. the 1st state called the waking state or 'Jagrat', the 2nd state called the dreaming or 'Swapna', and the 3rd called the deep sleep state of consciousness or 'Sushupta'. There is a 4th state also, and it is called 'Turiya', which is obtained as a result of going beyond the 3rd stage of deep sleep, and it is a permanent state of bliss and felicity in which the conscious Atma usually lives in ordinary people who are said to be self-realised. Beyond this 4th state is the Turiyateet, literally the state which is beyond the Turiya state and in which the Atma (pure consciousness) is free from all the encumbrances and characters displayed by it during the other four states. Therefore, Turiyateet would be the 5th state of existence of the Atma, and the higher transcendental state when the spiritual aspirant experiences oneness with Brahm. The Turiyateet state is the state of existence

of 'super-consciousness' on a perpetual basis. Whereas the Turiya state is the hallmark of those who are self-realised, the Turiyateet state is the benchmark for those who are Brahm-realised. The Turiya state is the preliminary ground which paves the way for attaining the Turiyateet state.

To start with the understanding of these different states of existences of the consciousness, we have to begin with the fundamental two states in which the creature lives in this world. These two are the following—(1) the waking and (2) the sleeping states. For the purposes of analyzing the behaviour and existential states of the creature during these two fundamental stages, they have been classified into three distinct states as follows—the waking state called 'Jagrat', the dream state called 'Swapna', and the deep sleep state called 'Sushupta. Beyond these three, there are two transcendental states called Turiya and Turiyateet states of existence of the consciousness in which self-realisation and Brahm-realisation are possible, or which mark the state in which those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised exist. It is the transcendental state of supreme enlightenment and self-realisation.

References--(1) The *three states of existence of the consciousness* have been described in the following Upanishads amongst others—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm/Amrit Bindu, verse no. 11; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 20-23, 27-32. (c) Atharva Veda—Prashna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-6.

(2) The *four states of existence of the consciousness* have been described in the following Upanishads amongst others—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Trishikhi Brahman Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 149-150; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38; Subalo-panishad, Canto 4 full as well as Canto 9, verse no. 1-7; Paingalo-panishad, 2/11-16; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4-2/5; Turiyateet Upanishad. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 59-64, 72; Canto 4, verse no. 11-20; Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 1, 20-21; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 12-14; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/12-93/15; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 4; Shaarirak Upanishad, verse no. 14; Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 11. (c) Atharva Veda tradition—Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Atharvashikha Upanishad; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4-7; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 1, 24-26; Canto 6, verse no. 4, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-16, 19-20; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3,verse nos. 5-8; Param Hans Parivarjak Upanishad, pargraph no. 6; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 25; Canto 2, verse nos. 12-16; Canto 3, verse nos. 10, 13, 16-18; Canto 5, verse nos. 16, 46, 84-85, 88-89, 109-111.

(3) The *five states of existence of the consciousness* have been described in the following Upanishads amongst others—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Turiyateet Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verses 1-7; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahman 2, section 2 full, and section 4, verse no. 1; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 11-15. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/12—93/15. (c) Atharva Veda--Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse nos. 3-4.

We will now endeavour to analyse all these five states of existence of the conscious Atma in simple terms in brief.

According to the *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11, there are three types of world that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states of consciousness in this world. They are Vishwa (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), Taijas (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of consciousness), and Pragya (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

(a) The 1st stage is called waking or *Jagrat*. During this state, a creature's sense organs that constitute its gross body are active and they receive inputs from the physical material world outside which they in turn transfer to the mind which forms the creature's subtle body. This mind then filters through the clutter of information, then either orders the organs of action to respond accordingly, or it consults its supervisor, the intellect, for advice. Meanwhile, the mind stores all the information in its data bank for future reference much like the record room of an office. The true self of the creature, the pure conscious Atma, is like the King in whose secretariat the mind and intellect work, and therefore the Atma is the final Authority which takes the final decision and is responsible for all the things done by each of these individual entities. Even as the King cannot absolve himself for the sins committed by his subjects during his rule or plead ignorance of whatever is happening in his kingdom though he is not directly involved in them or in the day to day routine work of the kingdom as he stays in his palace and cannot be practically expected to control each movement in his kingdom, but he is morally responsible for them and cannot deny this responsibility. Similarly, the Atma of the creature is responsible for each and every thing that the creature does though the Atma is limited to its palace-like residence in the heart of the creature. So, the otherwise immaculate Atma is accused of things that body or mind of the creature does because the Atma is at the helm of affairs.

During this Jagrat state, the Atma interacts with the outside world through the medium of the sense organs of the gross body (i.e. the physical body). The sense organs of perception of the body collect information from the external world and pass them over to the mind, which in turn processes them and passes necessary instructions to the organs of action on the one hand, and files data for future reference in its memory bank on the other hand. The mind would also refer to the intellect those things which are not routine in nature.

The Jagrat state is when the consciousness is aware of the external world of material objects, and this is made possible through the medium of the sense organs of perceptions such as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin which enables the creature to respectively see, hear, smell, taste and feel this world. The creature's responses are carried out with the help of the organs of action such as the hands which receive, the legs that take him to the desired place, the mouth that helps him to speak and eat, the excretory organs that helps it to eliminate waste from the body, and the genitals which helps him to recreate and enjoy the sensual pleasures of the world. These organs are located in the gross body, and since the world is experienced through them, the latter is also deemed to be gross. The coordination of all the perceptions and

actions is done by the mind-intellect which is the subtle part of the body.

The first stage of Jagrat or waking state of consciousness has been beautifully described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 20; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 16-19, 31, 34-35.

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 5 describes the first state of existence of consciousness, called the Jagrat or waking state. Now let us see what it says—The cosmic, divine, sublime and ethereal monosyllabic word OM is known as 'Akshar' as it is imperishable and immortal. [The Sanskrit word 'Akshar' has two meanings—one is a 'letter' and the other is something that 'does not decay, is imperishable and eternal'. OM is likened to a 'letter' because it is a monosyllabic sound. For the purpose of study and analysis of its magnificent divine aspects it is hypothetically split into three (A, U, M), four (A, O, U, M) and even six (A, O, U, M, Chandra Bindu and Ardha Maatra) components. It ought to be remembered that OM is not an ordinary monosyllable, but it is the Beej Mantra for the supreme transcendental Authority of creation and the cosmic Consciousness known as 'Brahm' that is at the root of everything that exists. This 'cosmic Consciousness' is known as Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the Brahm, the Supreme Being, at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma, the individual soul of the creature known as the Jiva, the living being, at the microcosmic level of creation.]

The entire visible world is but a manifestation/revelation of OM. In other words, the world is a visible form of the various aspects of OM (and since OM is the Beej Mantra for Brahm, this world is a visible manifestation of the latter). The visible physical world establishes and makes evident or visible the magnificent and stupendous glory of that invisible supreme Authority of creation known as the sublime Consciousness or the divine Brahm that is represented by the ethereal sound of OM.

Whatever existed, whatever exists and whatever shall ever exist in the future, as well as any other dimension or aspect of time and space which is beyond these three, are also nothing else but a manifestation or an extension of OM as a representative of Brahm. It is all-inclusive and comprehensive in nature.

Surely, everything is Brahm and a manifestation of Brahm, and nothing else. Therefore, it is also OM in a visible and manifested form. [Since everything is a manifestation of Brahm, and OM is a word used to indicate Brahm as it is a Beej Mantra of Brahm, it follows that the entire creation is a symbol of OM in its physical form. This eclectic world view of creation creates a high level of equanimity of thought, and establishes uniformity and universality in this creation. It removes all causes or basis of dichotomies, schisms, frictions, ill-well and jealousy, thereby instilling harmony and calmness in the entire creation just like the case of the word OM which is treated as a monosyllabic sound though it has four sound components that are perfectly integrated in its sound structure.

Hence, though we assign different names and categories to different units of creation for the purpose of dealing with them in day-to-day life, it will be wise and enlightened to regard them as an integral and an inseparable part of one wholesome cosmic entity for all practical

purposes.

As has been said above, OM is the Beej Mantra of Brahm. Brahm is known and recognized by this word OM. They are synonymous with each other. If this world is a visible manifestation of Brahm and an extension of its glory, it follows that the world is actually a manifestation and an extension of OM and its glory. Again, since Brahm is pure Consciousness, it follows that what is basic to this world is 'consciousness' and nothing else. In other words, if 'Brahm' and 'consciousness' are removed from this world, nothing worthy remains in it. Hence, Brahm or cosmic Consciousness is the 'Tattwa' of creation; it is the essential and basis unit of creation around which the rest of the edifice of creation is moulded.

OM has four basic sounds—viz. the sound of the letter 'A' (as in son) which represents the first aspect of Brahm symbolizing the initiation of creation, 'Oo or U' (like the letter 'O' in the word go) stands for the second aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the development, expansion and growth of the world, 'M' (as in mum) stands for the third aspect of Brahm and corresponds to the conclusion of the world, and finally the prolonged nasal sound of 'M' that is made after OM has been pronounced completely and the mouth closed stands for the fourth aspect of Brahm, and it corresponds to the time between the last creation and the beginning of a new phase. Hence, it naturally follows that the entire creation is nothing but a revelation of the four subtle and most esoteric aspects of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm that is envisioned in the form of a sound equivalent to that made by saying the monosyllabic word 'OM'. This is why OM is regarded as the Beej Mantra for Brahm just like we have the monosyllabic word 'Raam/Raan(g)' as the Beej Mantra for Lord Ram because the Lord's name 'Ram' is based on a single Sanskrit letter 'Ra' as in the word run.

The four letters of OM, i.e. A, O, U and M, exist only in a hypothetical plane and are employed for the express purpose of analysis and study. It must be remembered that OM is a monosyllabic sound that is one, continuous, and unbroken sound. These letters have been imagined just for the purpose of understand OM. This instance is cited to explain how the entire creation and the four states of existence of consciousness are indistinguishable from one another when we consider the entire creation in a holistic and wholesome manner. Similarly, this also explains how Brahm is one single indivisible and immutable whole though it has been said to have four Paads in the present Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads.]

The world is a visible and gross manifestation of what is essentially invisible, sublime, subtle and supreme entity—i.e. the visible gross physical world is a manifestation of Brahm who is invisible, subtle, sublime and supreme. The visible and verifiable world proves that there is something beyond the spectrum of visibility that is real and truthful, and of which it is an image. That essential element which forms the 'soul' and the 'basic identity' of the world is called its 'Atma'. Since it is Brahm that is at the core of all aspects of creation, it follows that Brahm is also the 'Atma or soul' or 'essence and fundamental aspect' of creation, or the 'Tattwa' of creation—both at the macrocosmic level of creation, in which case it is called the 'Paramatma' (the supreme and transcendental Atma), as well as at the microcosmic level of creation, in which case it is simply called the Atma of the individual creature.

This Atma or Parmatma has four Paads or limbs or aspects corresponding to the four Paads of Brahm represented by the four sounds of OM. Again, since the Atma is nothing but pure consciousness, it follows that the four Paads of the Atma or Brahm represent the four states of existence of the 'consciousness'.

[Although the supreme Brahm is indivisible, immutable and eternal, and it cannot be fractioned or partitioned, we hypothetically divide its entire being into four stages or states of existence just in order to understand or grasp its full form or nature like the monosyllabic sound OM that has been split into four components just for the purpose of study and analysis. That is, this division is done to facilitate study and comprehension of an entity that is usually beyond the reach of the mind and the senses.

The universal sound OM is split into four components A, O, U and M. These are regarded as being representatives of the four aspects of creation—viz. the origin, the development, the expansion and growth, and the conclusion respectively. They also respectively represent the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, Sushupta or deep sleep state, and Turiya or post-Sushupta state. This latter concept is explained below.]

The supreme transcendental Atma or the cosmic Consciousness, also known as 'Brahm' and represented by the word OM, has so-called four states of existence—viz. (a) The waking state of consciousness called 'Jagrat' (or Vishwa), (b) the dream state of consciousness called 'Swapna' (or Taijasa), (c) the deep sleep state of consciousness called 'Pragna', and (d) the 'Turiya' state of consciousness which is synonymous with the supreme blissful state of consciousness called 'pure Brahm', and which is beyond the earlier three states of existence of consciousness.

To begin with, the 1st state of consciousness, called the 'First Paad' or the first leg of the conscious Atma, is being described here in this verse as follows—

During the waking state of consciousness, the entire manifest gross world is the Atma's play-ground. The consciousness is spread in all the directions of the gross world because during this waking state of its existence it is aware of the entire length and breath of this world and all its happenings. Since this world is gross, the Atma during this waking state also becomes gross in nature because of its association with this gross world. The Atma assumes the basic gross character of this world as it is invariably influenced by the gross nature of its surrounding habitat with which it has to keep constant contact. During the Jagrat state, the Atma of the creature interacts with the physical gross world in which the creature lives. The Atma keeps company with the material sense objects of this world through the sense organs of the body of the creature. This contact is bound to have its influence upon the Atma, and since the world is gross and artificial, since it is dominated by the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) in varying proportions, as well as by Maya (delusions) along with its own array of problems, it follows that this influence is not positive at all, it is not conducive to the Atma's welfare and peace. Such is the influence of the Jagrat state that the Atma becomes restless and agitated; it forgets that its primary nature is one of being eternally peaceful and rested. In brief, the Atma acquires

some degree of grossness and a tainted character so typical of this world.

From another angle this concept can be understood as follows—the conscious Atma, which essentially has no form and attributes, manifests it's self in the form of the visible world, and resides in all the forms that this world takes. This is because Atma and Brahm are synonymous, and it is Brahm that is revealed in the form of the world. That is, all the living creatures of the world have the same Atma or pure consciousness in them. In other words, the Atma assumes the gross body of all the living beings, and it is with these bodies that the Atma of the individual interacts with the world of material sense objects. The Atma becomes aware of the presence of the various sense objects of the world by the medium of the sense organs of the gross body. These organs help the Atma to perceive the world and respond to it. That is why they are called organs of perception and organs of action of the Atma. The Atma is linked to the world through the sense organs that collectively make up the gross body of the creature.

Hence, during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness, the Atma has spread its tentacles in the external material world and its sense objects which are primarily gross in nature. It lives in this world just like it lives inside the body of the individual creature. Therefore, the gross world becomes its de-facto body while the Atma exists in the Jagrat (waking) state. It begins to identify its self with the gross body (and forgets that it is most sublime and subtle in nature, and is the invisible consciousness that has no form). During the Jagrat state, the Atma is not only aware of the gross world but relates to it very intimately.

Hence, it is metaphorically said that the seven worlds[1] are the Atma's gross body during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness—it physically lives in them, it mentally and emotionally relates to them, it is involved in them, and it is attached to them. During the Jagrat state, the Atma thinks that the external world is all that there is to it in existence, that the truth about which the scriptures speak is the external physical world with which it physically interacts during this state. But the deluded Atma forgets that the scriptures also speak that this world is an imagination of the mind because it has its origin in the mental wish of the supreme Creator to create something, that therefore it is artificial, deceptive, deluding and entrapping by its inherent nature. It becomes difficult for the Atma to realise the truth of this conclusion of the scriptures as it physically interacts with the gross world and feels its present in tangible terms. Therefore, the Atma takes to this world like fish to water, not realizing that this plunge would land it in a grave bog of slush and quicksand. Therefore, the otherwise immaculate and untainted Atma, which is regarded as the pure consciousness personified, becomes tainted and corrupted by all the characteristic negativities, unholy influences and demeaning qualities typical of this world.

[The seven worlds represent all forms of the living creation, and all forms of creatures that live in them. Hence, they symbolically refer to all forms of life where the Atma or the pure consciousness is aware of the existence of the external gross world—even in a rudimentary form.]

The Atma uses its nineteen symbolic 'mouths'[2] to eagerly devour or passionately taste and imbibe the sweetness of the external world and the numerous comforts and pleasures it has to offer.

[Even as a man uses his mouth to partake delicious eatables, this Atma uses its so-called mouths to 'taste or sample' the extraordinary charms and juicy succulence of the external world, its material comforts and the pleasures of the sense objects. And just like the man gets addicted to some tasty eatable, the Atma gets hooked to the world and its charms. It then goes out to hammer and tong to grasp the world and 'devour it' in a symbolic manner by remaining engrossed in it and thinking of nothing else but this world like a hungry man let loose on a dining table. The Atma gets hooked to the world and its material sense objects. Rather, the world attaches itself to the Atma like the leech which sucks the blood of wisdom, erudition, rationality, enlightenment and truthfulness out of the Atma, making the latter lose its pristine pure, uncorrupted and blissful nature. The Atma acts like a greedy bee that hops from flower to flower sucking a bit of nectar from this and a bit from that. It also behaves like a greedy bird that hops from one fruit to another on a tree, nibbling a bit of all of them till the end of the day, resulting in destroying all the fruits, littering the ground under the tree, but still remaining unsatisfied, and feeling tired at the end of the day.]

That supreme and sovereign entity which enjoys this gross world and is aware of its existence is called 'Vaishwanar'. This is the supreme Brahm's first Paad or aspect. It is also the first form or state of existence of the Atma. (5).

[Note—[1]The seven subtle forms of the world are represented by the seven words pronounced by Brahma, the creator, at the time of creation. They are the following—Bhu (भूः), Bhuvaha (भुवः), Swaha (स्वः), Maha (महः), Janaha (जनः), Tapaha (तपः), Satyamaha (सत्यमः).

According to Brahmaand Puran (BP) and Vaaman Puran (VP) there are the following lokas— 'Bhu' (भूः) or earth [BP-3,4,2-18]; 'Bhuvaha' (भुवः) or the space between the earth and the heaven [BP-3,4,2-19]; 'Swaha' (स्वः) or the heavens known as Brahma's abode; the space beyond the earth's atmosphere; cosmic wind represented by the solar wind blows here [BP-3,4,2-20]; 'Maha' (महः) or the world created by Brahma pronouncing the divine word Maha meaning the great heaven or the outer space; it is believed that great sages and seers stay here; it is 1000 Yogans or appx. 8000 miles away from the Swaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-21; VP-52,21-22]; 'Janaha' (जनः), so called because it was to be inhabited by the humans and the cows [BP-3,4,2-22; VP-52, 22]; 'Tapaha' (तपः) or the Loka where great amount of austerity and penances are done; it is said to be 60 million Yojans or appx. 60 x 8 million miles away from the Janaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-24; VP-52, 23]; and 'Satyam' (सत्यम्) or the truthful heaven where the supreme Lord has his abode; it is 300 million Yojans or appx. 300 x 8 million miles beyond the Tapaha Loka [BP-3,4,2-25; VP-52, 24].

According to some legends, the distances of various mythological Lokas from the earth or Bhu Loka is as follows—the Bhuvha Loka is situated at a distance of 25 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Swaha Loka is situated at a distance of 50 Lakh Yojans from earth, the Maharloka is situated at a distance of 1 Crore Yojans from earth, the Jana Loka is situated at a distance of 2 Crore Yojans from earth, the Tapa Loka is situated at a distance of 4 Crore Yojans from earth, and the Satya Loka is situated at a distance of 8 Crore Yojans from earth.

1 Yojan = a distance of 4, 8 and 16 miles according to different calculations. It is usually taken to be equivalent to 8 miles.

1 Lakh = one hundred thousand (1,00,000). 1 Crore = ten Lakhs (10 x 1,00,000).

The seven Bhuvans or Lokas according to the Vedantic view are the following:— the seven organs of perception situated in the region of the head —viz. the two eyes + two ears + two nostrils + one tongue/mouth = seven. Refer Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, section 1, verse no. 8.

The Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 4 also refers to these seven Lokas as being a part of the first Paad or leg or limb or aspect or facet of the cosmic Brahm.

[2]The nineteen symbolic mouths of the Atma are the different organs, both gross and the subtle through which it interacts with the external world and recognizes it at all. These are as follows—(a) the five organs of perception such as eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin; (b) the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, anus/excretory and genitals; (c) the five Prans or the vital winds such as the main Pran which controls the very life of the creature and all other functions including the other Prans or vital winds, the Apaan which controls digestion and excretion, the Samaan which helps in distribution of nourishment and blood equally throughout the body, the Vyan which control the activities of other winds and helps in maintaining pressure and balance in the body, and the Udaan which controls the power to rise and move around; and (d) the four 'Antaha-karans' are the four sheaths that surround the Atma and form its subtle forms; these are the food sheath, the vital air sheath, the mental sheath and the intellectual sheath. [According to the Shaarirak Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 4, the four aspects of the 'Antahakaran' (the inner-self consisting of the subtle body; the conscience; the sub-conscious) consists of the following four units—viz. the Mana (mind), the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (the faculty of reasoning, thought, understanding, attention, the sub-conscious etc.), and Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness and the accompanying arrogance and hypocrisy; lack of humility, simplicity and piety).]

These are called the so-called 'mouths' of the soul because it is through them that the soul partakes of this world. The entity whose gross body enjoys and experiences this world is called the 'Viraat' at the macrocosmic level and 'Vishwa' at the microcosmic level. This is the 1st step to understand the supreme Soul called 'Parmeshwar' or the supreme Lord known as Brahm.]

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 4 also refers to these seven Lokas as being a part of the first Paad or leg or limb or aspect or facet of the cosmic Brahm.

[2]The nineteen symbolic mouths of the Atma are the different organs, both gross and the subtle through which it interacts with the external world and recognizes it at all. These are as follows—(a) the five organs of perception such as eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin; (b) the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, anus/excretory and genitals; (c) the five Prans or the vital winds such as the main Pran which controls the very life of the creature and all other functions including the other Prans or vital winds,

the Apaan which controls digestion and excretion, the Samaan which helps in distribution of nourishment and blood equally throughout the body, the Vyan which control the activities of other winds and helps in maintaining pressure and balance in the body, and the Udaan which controls the power to rise and move around; and (d) the four 'Antaha-karans' are the four sheaths that surround the Atma and form its subtle forms; these are the food sheath, the vital air sheath, the mental sheath and the intellectual sheath. [According to the Shaarirak Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 4, the four aspects of the 'Antahakaran' (the inner-self consisting of the subtle body; the conscience; the sub-conscious) consists of the following four units—viz. the Mana (mind), the Buddhi (intellect), the Chitta (the faculty of reasoning, thought, understanding, attention, the sub-conscious etc.), and Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness and the accompanying arrogance and hypocrisy; lack of humility, simplicity and piety).]

These are called the so-called 'mouths' of the soul because it is through them that the soul partakes of this world. The entity whose gross body enjoys and experiences this world is called the 'Viraat' at the macrocosmic level and 'Vishwa' at the microcosmic level. This is the 1st step to understand the supreme Soul called 'Parmeshwar' or the supreme Lord known as Brahm.

[3]Vaishwanar Atma—References: (a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 21; Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 15. (b) Atharva Veda's Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 3.

The term Vaishwanar in simple words means the form of Brahm that is as large and as vast as the universe, enclosing it from all sides like a moat of a fort, and even existing beyond it. This all-inclusive, all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm is the 'Vishwa' or the world because this world is a manifestation of Brahm, it is Brahm revealed in its myriad and diverse forms, and it is the glory of Brahm on display. If fact, if one wishes to witness Brahm, he must observe Brahm at play in this world itself. The physical aspect of Brahm in the form of the visible world is equivalent to the Jagrat state of consciousness because it is in this state that the creature sees the world. Here the word 'creature' refers to his Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and his true self. This Atma is called Vaishwanar because, like Brahm, it is manifested as all forms of life in this world. [Refer Mandukya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 3.] The Atma is called a Vaishwanar because the man becomes aware of the world when he sees it with his own eyes. This is why it is called the 'waking' state of consciousness. The presence of the consciousness known as the Vaishwanar in the eye is a metaphor for this waking state because when a man 'sees' anything only when he is awake and not while he sleeps.

The word 'Vaishwanar' has many connotations as follows—(i) The fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature and helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since creatures

have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called 'Viraat Purush' (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of 'Vaishwanar'. (v) The gross manifestation of this 'Vaishwanar' is the 'Annamaya Kosh' or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the 'waking state of consciousness'. (vii) The word also means—relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.]

(b) Next comes the state in which a person sleeps, and in metaphysical terms it is called Supta. This is the sleeping state of consciousness. Here, the creature is alive because it's Pran or the vital winds move around and remain active in its different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body such as the nerves which number seventy thousand).

The *Prashna Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 2 very precisely describes what sleep is. To quote—"Just like the case of the rays of the sun collecting themselves and collapsing in the disc of the setting sun and re-emerging the next day when the sun rises, the various sense perceptions of the body relevant to different sense organs withdraw themselves and rest in the Mana or the mind of the Purush or the man (when he goes to sleep). Hence, in this situation he does not see, hear, taste, smell or feel (because the sense organs of perception related to these functions have become inactive), and neither does he speak (because the organ of action known as the mouth has become inactive), accept anything (because the organ of action known as the hand has become inactive), expels stool or other wastes from the body (because the organs of action concerned with these functions have become inactive), and enjoy anything (especially the enjoyment of sex and other sensual gratifications because the organs related to such enjoyments too have become inactive). In fact, he makes no effort of any kind.

This state of existence of the creature or his consciousness is called 'sleep' (2)."

In this state of 'Supta' or sleep, the consciousness is said to exist in two forms—viz. as Swapna and as Sushupta.

The *Swapna* or dreaming state is the 2nd state of consciousness when the latter has withdrawn its self from being actively involved in the outside world through the medium of the sense organs of perception and action. But the mind does not sleep and remains active as before, though this activity is at the subtle level of the sub-conscious. Here, the consciousness remains active through the medium of the vital winds, called the various Prans present inside the body, and moves in the different Naadis (tubular ducts in the body, such as the nerves and veins etc.) which keep the mind working. Refer Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 12, and Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 18; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 20; Krishna Yajur Veda's Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 58-60; Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 19.

This Pran is deemed to be synonymous with the life factors and consciousness in the body as well as with the latent fire element present inside the body which gives the energy, strength and vitality to the body to live and remain active. If it were not for the fire element (Tej) and the wind element (Pran), the consciousness (Atma, the 'self') would have found it difficult to live in the body. In fact, the Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 3 clearly states that the Pran in its manifestation as Agni or fire.

Since no external stimuli is being received from the outside world, the mind begins to replay what is stored in its memory bank and uses its stupendous abilities to imagine and recreate situations and circumstances in an imaginary world of dreams. Since the Atma living in the causal body depends upon the mind living in the subtle body to feel or sense anything pertaining to this world, for all practical purposes therefore the Atma begins to live in this new world of dreams conjured up by the mind and gets as involved in it as it was during the waking state. Since the mind is active here, the man remembers some of his dreams even when he wakes up. So as far as the Atma is concerned, the two states of waking and dreaming means the same—the world exists for it in both these two states.

During the sleeping stage, the Atma sees dreams. This is called Swapna state of existence of the consciousness. The *Prashna Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 5 describes what a dream is and how the creature sees it. To quote—"The exalted deity (i.e. the Consciousness or the Atma) experiences its glories and majesty made evident during the Jagrat or waking state of existence. [During the waking state, all the organs are active, and the creature's true 'self', i.e. his Atma, can witness the stupendous achievements that the body can attain with the help of its sense organs. Since the Atma is the truthful identity of the person who makes the various achievements and obtains success in different fields with the help of the organs of the body while he is awake, it is the Atma who is supposed to be the actual beneficiary of these achievements and successes. So, the Atma watches them with pride and feels satisfied.]

Now when the same deity sleeps, it recollects or remembers those things that it had seen or experienced while it was awake. It sees, hears and experiences those things once again during the sleeping state, not at the physical plane but at the subtle plane of the sub-conscious.

Not only limited to this, it can even see, hear and experience things that it could not see, hear and experience during the waking state because then it had to face the barrier of the limitations of the gross body and the gross physical world. Since this barrier is removed during the sleeping state and the subtle aspect of the body consisting of the mind and the sub-conscious are given freedom to fly according to their inclinations, the deity can even see, hear and experience things unimaginable during the waking state of its existence. It gets so involved in this scenario that it becomes a part of it much like it was the part of the waking world (5)."

The two states of Jagrat and Swapna have been explained in detail elsewhere also, for instance in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 9-14.

Ordinarily, the consciousness oscillates between the Jagrat (waking) and Swapna (dreaming) state as affirmed in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 16-18, 34-35.

According to *Paingalo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12, when the creature is in dreaming state of existence, his Prans (vital life-consciousness represented by the vital winds) moves along the various Naadis (tubular ducts in the body).

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in Canto 2, verse no. 61, describes how 'dreams' are seen. To quote—

"Verse no. 61 = When the Buddhi (the thinking mind which remembers and ponders and determines upon something or its different aspects relying upon the data collected and previously stored in the sub-conscious part of the brain) is freed from any external interference from the sense organs of the gross body as happens during the waking state of the latter, it is then relocated in the various Naadis (nerves of the body) and sustained by the consciousness flowing through them. It is in this state that the man dreams[1].

Therefore it naturally follows that when the mind (awareness of existence; the sub-conscious) stops flowing through the Naadis, i.e. when it too goes into a hibernating state like external sense organ of the body, the man would not dream (61).

[Note—[1]During the phase when the man is awake, the external organs of the body continue to receive an unbroken chain of sensory impulses from the external world, and pass them all to the brain through the network of Naadis (nerves). This data is collated and collected by the mind. Some require immediate action—such as the need for eating something when one sees something enticing or when one is hungry. There are other inputs from the world that the mind stores in the data bank or the sub-conscious that acts like a library for future referral. Some information needs intelligent analysis and is referred to the higher echelons of the brain, called the faculty of the intellect. The intellect either advises the mind with an option or reserves the order for consideration and implementation at a future date. All this continues in an ongoing process throughout the length of a man's life.

Now, when the man is asleep the external organs go on hibernation mode—they neither receive any input nor have to respond to any impulse. In such a state the mind and intellect remain very much active, and now the sub-conscious has a greater say. This is because the mind is freed from all the 'routine file work of the office' when the man was awake. Now the mind has the time to peep into its data bank and ponder upon the collected information to think upon it. This is proved by the fact that it is very usual for a person to 'sleep over complicated matters and then come out with a surprisingly good answer or solution' that had defied all answers or solutions inspite of all his best of efforts during his waking time. Great discoveries, ideas, creative innovations have been made in history while a man had suddenly woken up from sleep with them. This is because the intelligent mind was working full time in association with the sub-conscious to come up with a solution or answer for something that had been bothering it all along.

This is also how dreams are seen. The sub-conscious plays out the things that the mind knew it is capable of doing but could not do because of the limitations imposed by

the gross body. During sleep such physical restrictions are removed and the 'mind can fly at its will'.]"

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 6 describes the second state of existence of consciousness, called the Swapna or dreaming state. Now let us see what it says—The 2nd state of existence of the Atma, the pure consciousness, is called the 'Swapna state' of existence, or the dreaming state. The imaginary world that is visualized by the latent 'Vasanas' (passions, desires and yearnings) that are inherently present in the sub-conscious of the creature is called a 'dream'. This is an imaginary world inspired by the Vasanas present in the bosom of the creature.

During this state, the man is virtually lying unconscious and completely inactive in the physical sense as his gross physical body is completely inactive and lying like a log of wood. He lies on the ground as if he had no life in him, and was like a dead man as far as his external activities pertaining to his gross body and its organs are concerned. But during this state of existence known as Swapna (dreaming), the mind remains very much active though the external gross body and its sense organs are completely inactive. During this state, the mind, accompanied by the sub-conscious, is as active as it was during the Jagrat (waking) state, the only difference being in the level of its activity. So, while in the Jagrat state its activity pertained to the gross world, during the Swapna stgate this activity is happening in a subtle level. A man dreams because the mind and the sub-conscious conjure up a most fascinating world in which the Atma lives during this phase of existence. To a great extent, the capacity of the mind to 'imagine and fly' is fully unleashed and tapped in one's dreams as opposed to the physical world while the man was awake—because while the latter phase presents many physical barriers of practical nature, none such obstacles are there in one's dreams. In some senses, the world of dreams is fancier and more charming than that of the physical world of the waking state simply because in this subtle state of existence the mind is given wings to imagine and fly according to its wishes without having to cope with any limitations of the physical gross world. [For instance, a man cannot fly in practical terms when he is awake, or he cannot physically jump from a tall building without aid and survive as this would be nothing less than a suicidal jump, he can indeed attempt such feats while dreaming. In fact, the full potentials of the mind and the sub-conscious are unlocked during the dreaming phase—as is proved occasionally when insurmountable problems of daily life face by a harried man find their solutions when he sleeps, leading him to wake up with answers to the same problems that had defied all attempts to solve them earlier.]

It is the mind that imagines, and not the gross body. Therefore, during the Swapna or dreaming state of existence of consciousness, the Atma is very much active and aware of the happenings around it, but instead of them being related to the gross plane of existence they are now confined to an imaginary world conceived in a 'dream'. Hence, 'dream' or the Swapna state of existence of the consciousness is synonymous with that which is an 'imaginary' conception of the mind without any physical gross dimension. It is something that has no real physical existence and pith. In other words, the Atma or the consciousness exists in its 'Sukshma' or the subtle form now in the dreaming state.

For all practical purposes, the Atma (or the creature's 'self' or his consciousness) interacts with this imaginary world of dreams during the 'Swapna' state of existence in the same way as it had been doing in the gross world while it was awake during the waking state called 'Jagrat'. That is, even during a dream, as long as it lasts, the Atma thinks that it is actually interacting with all the participants of that dream; it weeps, it laughs, it plays and it talks with them all as if they were alive and for real in the virtual world. For this purpose, the Atma uses its 'virtual' nineteen organs or mouths as it had been doing while it was interacting with the physical gross world while awake, though now they are in their 'subtle forms' instead of their gross forms.

Therefore, even in the dream state of existence of the Atma, there are seven worlds and nineteen mouths, though they exist is a subtle form, and not in their gross forms. The Atma lives in this subtle world of dreams, is an integral part of it, identifies its self with it, is influenced by it and is as involved and attached to its components in the same way as it did during the waking state.

That Atma which exists in this subtle form, that Atma which exists in the subtle world, and that Atma which uses the subtle organs to interact with this subtle world, is called 'Taijas'. This Taijas is the microcosmic subtle form of the Atma which has its counterpart at the macrocosmic level of creation in the 'Hiranyagarbha'. The latter therefore is the macrocosmic subtle aspect of the cosmic Consciousness very much like the Taijas is at the microcosmic level.

The Taijas has all the constituent parts of the 1st step or stage (called the 'Vishwa') as described in the preceding verse, but instead of being gross by the virtue of its association with the external gross world of material sense objects it now is in a subtle form as it is associated with a subtle world. Instead of being in contact with the deluding outside world involving its gross organs of action and perception, it is now more subtle in nature being based on the mind and its capacity to imagine and fly. [But it must nevertheless be noted that the Atma, the pure consciousness, still does not find pure peace and happiness as it is still buffeted by waves of emotions and the influence of Vasanas in the subtle level of its existence during the dreaming state of its existence as much as it was distracted and influenced by the physical world during the waking state. The only obvious difference is that during the dreaming state there is no physical barriers and limitations that are natural to the gross body and the gross physical world which has limited the stupendous potentials of the Atma. As compared to the physical gross body, the subtle mind has stupendous powers and potentials—the mind can fly and imagine things that were simply incredulous to even speak of during the waking state of the body, thereby lending the Atma with equal potentials to imagine and reach those realms where it could not ever hope to do while awake. In brief, the Swapna is called 'subtle' as it gives 'wings to the Atma' and enables it to perform deeds that it was unable to in the Jagrat state. The physical world that exists during the waking state imposes certain inhibitions on the Atma, but all such fetters are removed while it dreams, and therefore it can do unimaginable things during its dream which would be unthinkable for it to do during its interaction with the world while in

its waking state of existence.

During the Swapna or dreaming state of existence, the external stimuli from the outside world cease to affect the mind, but the latent and inherent tendencies, called the various 'Vasanas', create an imaginary world of perceptions and actions which are far more colourful than the actual world of the waking state, and which form an independent world of their own, called the world of dreams. This state of the Atma is not gross like the 1st stage, but it is a subtle state of existence of the consciousness, the state known as the Taijas state.

The word 'Taijas' is derived from the root 'Tej' meaning 'energetic, fast, dynamic, agile, full of vigour and vitality'. It is obvious from the above discussion that the Atma does indeed possess these potentials during the dreaming state of its existence. The word 'Taijas' also refers to light and its illumination. Hence, the Atma in this state is illuminated by the virtue of its inherent ability to create something from nothing—i.e. to 'dream' of things that do not have any substance and then be convinced that this imaginary world is truthful.] (6)."

(c) Beyond the second state of existence of consciousness is the third eclectic state called the *Sushupta* or deep sleep state. This has been elaborately dealt with in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Brahman 1, verse no. 19; Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 14-15, 19, 21-30. It has also been described in the Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 52; Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13; Canto 3, verse nos. 17-18. During this stage the creature does not dream.

The Sushupta or the deep sleep state of consciousness is the 3rd state in which the mind has also become defunct, and the Atma has withdrawn itself into the exclusive domain of the causal body and lives in seclusion, disconnected with the external world because of the non-involvement of either the gross body or the subtle body. Here it is surrounded by the space of the subtle sky around the heart, called the Hridya Akash. During this state of existence, the vital winds, called the Pran or 'life' of the creature, keep on moving in the different Naadis (various ducts such as nerves and veins etc.) as during the dreaming state so as to keep the body alive as is evident from the fact that all the subtle and imperceptible functions of the inner organs of the body such as the liver, kidneys, heart, pancreas, digestive organs, lungs etc. continue uninterrupted as before, because if they cease to function the body would die. It is the mind now that has gone in a defunct state. But this phase is temporary and shows the true nature and fundamental characteristic of the Atma, which is blissful and peaceful, contented and fulfilled, not feeling restless and perplexed in any manner whatsoever because it is now not being disturbed by the mind's constant nagging. That is why a sound asleep man does not want anything, he does not feel anything, he is not worried about anything, he is not concerned about anything, and he does not remember anything. That is also why one feels very relaxed and refreshed after even a short deep sleep when the mind and the body both find their rest.

The *Prashna Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 6 describes in clear terms why a creature stops dreaming. To quote—" When the deity or Lord of the body (i.e. the Atma, the pure conscious 'self') withdraws itself into its own realm in the heart, it gets surrounded by 'Teja', the splendour and radiance that is natural to it and effuses out of

it. In this condition it is deemed to have distanced itself from the Mana (which had made it see dreams as narrated in verse no. 5 above) and the Indris (the sense organs that had made it experience the world and interact with it). [This is because when the Atma, the deity of the body, comes to realise its own glorious nature, it finds true peace and tranquility, it feels exhilarated and happy so much so that now it forsakes the false notion of happiness and comforts that this physical material world and its counterpart seen in the dreams had presented to it to lure it in their snare. The Atma finds so much spiritual solace and succour in the realisation of its own state of enlightenment, the state called Pragya which is glorious, radiant and splendorous, that it need not think or ever worry about the other two states through which it had passed, i.e. the two states of waking and dreaming, to reach this eclectic and exalted state when the Atma is surrounded by its own radiance and splendour. This divine and eclectic state of self realisation is called enlightenment and Pragya—the state of truthful awareness.]

Therefore in this state, the Atma, the deity, does not dream. It experiences true happiness, solace, comfort and bliss. It enjoys the peace and tranquility that this realisation gives it (6)."

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in Canto 2, verse no. 62, describes the 'Sushupta' state of consciousness. To quote—

"Verse no. 62 = The consciousness is freed from the buffeting affects of the restless mind during the Sushupta state, i.e. the state of 'deep sleep' when there are no dreams and the mind also goes into hibernation like the rest of the gross body. Therefore, in this state the consciousness does not see or remains aware of anything pertaining to the external world[1]. It is at complete rest with itself. There is no interference of any kind that would disturb its poise and calm. It is in this state that the consciousness enjoys great bliss and happiness. [This is the reason why a man feels very refreshed and relaxed if he has a 'dream-less sleep' even for a short while as opposed to a night long sleep full of dreams.] (62).

[Note—[1]This happens because during this state both the active mind and the sub-conscious mind are asleep or inactive. It is the mind that perceives this world; it is the mind that has imagined this world in the first place. During the waking state, this mind makes the consciousness 'see, hear, taste, smell and feel' things of this external world through the external organs of perception. During the dreaming state, the sub-conscious mind makes the consciousness repeat the same thing through the dream. Since the Atma or the true 'self' of the creature represented by the pure consciousness has to rely upon the mind for all these perceptions and sights of the world, when the mind retires the Atma finds its inherent peace which it had lost due to this constant nagging and interference by its prime minister, the mind. So, if the wise man realises this fact and keep the mind permanently at bay or under tight leash, if he is successful in keeping this mischief-monger mind at a distance, he can be assured of eternal and everlasting peace even while he is awake just like the transient peace that is obtained while the body is sleeping in the deep sleep state which is beyond the dreaming state of sleep but is short lived.]"

The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 3, verse nos. 20-23, 27-32 describes the three levels of existence as follows—

"Verse no. 20-23 = When the spiritual aspirant who has developed this wisdom of thought that the supreme entity that empowers the faculty of speech to speak is the supreme transcendental Lord (Brahm) residing in his own bosom as his true self (as pure conscious Atma), he would behave accordingly. So, when someone speaks ill of him, or speaks to him with words that are rough, insulting and generally unwarranted, or on the contrary even speaks good of him and say comforting nice words to him, he would remain steady, composed and calm with stoic equanimity in both the cases. He would not at all be affected either by the uncalled for words and insinuations and lose his poise and calm, nor would he feel elated and proud at being praised and spoken good of. In both the cases he would remain completely indifferent to, unruffled by and unconcerned with what is being said. [This is because he knows that the Lord is speaking to him—scolding him for his wrongs, errors and shortcomings, or testing his patience, resilience and resolve, or lauding him for his goodness and virtuousness. So he must accept everything with great humility, for therein lies his greatness and proof of his exalted and enlightened state of existence.] [20 ½].

The creation at the microcosmic level of the individual creature is said to be of three kinds—viz. Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya[1]. The same creation at the macrocosmic level of the universe is said to be also of three kinds—viz. Viraat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwar[2]. The created world, i.e. the gross world, is similarly of three kinds—viz. Bhu, Bhuvaha and Swaha[3] [22].

All the various aspects of creation have unfolded from one basic source (the Bindu)[4], and when the time comes for conclusion and folding up of the world, they would naturally revert to their original and basic form from which they had sprouted in the beginning. [This single source is the supreme entity known as Brahm.] That is, when things are seen in the correct perspective and analysed with intelligent application of the mind, all extraneous appearances vanish and only the basic oneness of the entire edifice of creation is visible. In other words, when the world comes to a conclusion, it would merge and become indistinguishable from the egg-like primordial source from which it had emerged [23]. (20-23).

[Note—[1]The Vishwa refers to the gross body of the creature, i.e. his sense organs of perception and action which makes him aware of the external material and artificial world during his waking state; the Taijas refers to the subtle body of the creature, i.e. the mind-intellect complex that is active in his dreaming state of consciousness when the external physical world has ceased to exist but the mind still conjures up a colourful picture of the world in the dream and keeps itself as well the consciousness as active in it as in the physical world; and Pragya is causal body of the creature, i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness when the mind has also ceased to exist.

[2]Similarly, the three levels of existence at the macro level of creation are called respectively Viraat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwar. The word Viraat refers to the gross body of the cosmic consciousness that is vast and all-incorporating ('Viraat') and forms the sum total of all the gross bodies that exist at the micro level of creation; the Hiranyagarbha, literally the golden egg of the creation, refers to the subtle body of this

Viraat from which the latter has emerged; and Ishwar is the macro level counterpart of the causal body of the creature, i.e. it represents the causal body of the Viraat and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation.

Since the 'body' must have some living entity residing in it, it follows that this 'someone' or 'some living entity' is different from the body and it uses the body merely as its habitat or dwelling. This 'living entity' is known as the supreme transcendental consciousness called the Atma of the individual at the micro level of creation, and Brahm at the macro level. It is 'transcendental' because it goes beyond the limitations and definitions of the gross or subtle body. Since Brahm is the 'cause' of the entire creation coming into being, the inner chamber of the body where it lives is called 'causal'—one that causes something to happen. The counterpart of Brahm in the creature's body is the Atma. It is called 'consciousness' simply because it is the only truly living entity in the otherwise entirely inert and inane gross body made up of different elements which are themselves lifeless and lack any inherent consciousness in them besides being perishable and comparatively gross as compared to the pure Consciousness. Since the living being shows all signs of life and consciousness, since it has emotions and feelings, it is more akin to this Atma than it is to the gross inert body. This fact is acknowledged when the scriptures assert and affirm that the true nature and identity of the creature is the Atma and not the body in which this Atma lives.

Taking the example of this material world, physical science tells us that everything has a visible structure that depends upon molecules which themselves are formed by arrangement of atoms in different permutations and combinations. The atoms also have a world of their own, with the electrons circulating the central nucleus consisting of the protons and the neutrons. When we apply this theory to metaphysical understanding of creation, we can draw a parallel and deduce that the visible physical world is the gross body of Brahm, the molecules are the subtle body, and the atom is the causal body. The nucleus of the atom without which the atom—and therefore the entire edifice of the material world dependent upon this atom—would cease to have an existence is the Brahm of Vedanta. This would be the macrocosmic view of creation. Its microcosmic partner would be the atom itself—with its rounded structure being the gross body, the component of the electrons, neutrons and protons etc. being its subtle body, while the nucleus itself would be causal body which houses the neutrons, protons and other sub-atomic forces that regulate the functioning of the edifice of the atom as a whole.

[3]The seeds of the three worlds that would come into existence were encrypted in the three words that the creator Brahma had pronounced at the time of creation. They were—'Bhu' from which was created the mortal world represented by earth and its inhabitants, 'Bhuvaha' from which the space above the earth was created, i.e. the world of the sky where birds as well as Spirits etc. would live, and 'Swaha' represented the heavens where the Gods would have their abode. Therefore, these three words are the seeds from which the huge tree of this creation came into existence.

In the context of what has been said in note 1 and 2 above, the Bhu would correspond to the gross body of creation, Bhuvaha to the subtle body, and Swaha to the causal body, while the supreme Brahm would be the one who pronounced these words to initiate the

process in the beginning.

[4]This phenomenon can be best understood with the example of the huge tree with numerous big and small branches with their leaves, multicolored flowers, succulent fruits and hordes of birds, insects et al that find their temporary perch or permanent abode on it. The entire tree has had its origin in one single seed that is minuscule as compared to the size of the tree. This seed is like the 'Brahmaand' or universe in a miniature form, while the tree itself is the unfolded universe with its astounding variety and an astonishing array of multifaceted characteristics. When someone wishes to know the fundamental truth about the origin of this colourful tree, he would obviously come to conclusion that it is the seed. Similarly, when one goes deeper and deeper and sees the basic unit from which this edifice called the universe has emerged he would finally come to the conclusion that it is the microscopic Atma known as cosmic consciousness or Brahm. This is essentially the philosophy of the non-dual nature of the creation and the basis of Vedantic canons.

We can take another example to understand this phenomenon of the world having its origin in one single source—the 'dot', the Bindu, and then extending to reveal itself in its full bloom and vibrancy, and finally retracing itself back into the dot or the 'self' from where it had started out in the beginning on its journey of adventure should it wish to find its place of origin. Suppose one wishes to draw a line on a paper. The first point where the pen touches the paper is the metaphoric 'dot' or Bindu, and this is then stretched to become a line of whatever length one wishes. Can anyone draw a line without first making a dot? So it is safely deduced that the line is actually an extension of the single dot or Bindu, that the line consists of uncountable number of dots that add up to appear in the form of the line, and that the dot or Bindu is the parent-source of the entire line. When this 'stretched dot' known as the line ever wishes to retrace its step and find its source of origin, it is obvious that it would come back to the point called the dot which was made when the tip of the pen had first touched the paper. Similarly, if the line wishes to know its true nature it would discover that it is nothing but a series of dots.

Every modern man who has encountered the computer with its astounding and stupendous abilities knows the basic fact that the machine works on a series of zeros and ones; it knows no other language except the zero and the digit one. Likewise, a wise and enlightened man knows nothing else except the Atma and Brahm. The entire edifice of creation revolves around these two units as far he is concerned. But does this mean that there is duality? No, never, for he learns that the Atma and Brahm are the same entities at different planes of existence, the former at the micro level of existence and the latter at the macro level of existence.]

"Verse no. 27-28 = Essentially the Atma is inherently wise and enlightened, but when it assumes a gross body to live in, it comes under the corrupting and tainting influence of Maya (ignorance-induced delusions). Consequentially, this Atma begins to imagine that it has the three states of existence in this world—the Jagrat (waking state), the Swapna (dreaming state) and Sushupta (deep sleep state)[1]. With this faulty thinking, it becomes a victim of the bad influences of Maya.

When the good effects of his numerous past lives (here meaning 'when he is fortunate to have come in contact with wise men and has had the opportunity to study or hear the scriptures' that) create a conducive environment that fosters right thinking, breeds wisdom and inculcates the desire to know the truth and analyse the situation threadbare, the man begins to wander what his faults were that had led him into this quagmire of birth and death in the first place, given the fact that his 'true self', the Atma, is supposed to be free from life and death, and that it has no physical body. Then why has he come to such a sorry state of existence? He ponders on the eternal spiritual question—'who am I, what are my shortcomings or faults, and how come I have come to live in this gross world'? (27-28).

[Note—[1]Refer also to (a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm/Amrit Bindu, verse no. 11; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11.]

"Verse no. 29 = 'During the waking and dreaming states of existence, it appears that I am doing so many things. But what happens during the deep sleep state?' [During the waking state, the man does so many things with his gross body in this physical world, while in the dreaming state it is the subtle mind that makes him do so many things in the imaginary world of dreams. That is why in both the cases the man is doing something or the other—whether real or imaginary. But in the deep sleep state of existence, the mind becomes defunct, and consequentially three is no activity inspite of the fact that the consciousness does exist in the same body and radiates in it. This is proved by the fact the body does not die, and all its internal functions—such as the working of all its internal organs as the heart, liver, bladder, kidneys, lungs etc.—continue uninterrupted during this deep sleep state as if the man was awake and active. So what is that which lives in this state of deep sleep?]

This question haunts him and he keeps on contemplating upon its answer. [And upon deep analysis and study of the scriptures he comes to the conclusion that the entity which remains alive and active during this phase of deep sleep is called the 'consciousness', and it is this entity that is his true 'self'.] (29).

"Verse no. 30 = Even as a bale of cotton is reduced to ashes immediately on contact with fire, the worldly ignorance and its attendent delusions are eliminated as soon as the light of wisdom and enlightenment emanating from the pure consciousness lightens up the inner self of the man. This ends all his torments and miseries pertaining to ignorance, delusions and the world (30).

"Verse no. 31-32 = In this way, when the darkness of ignorance that this gross material world and its delusions are metaphors for are eliminated by the light of true knowledge and wisdom, its place is taken over by the brilliant light representing this truthful knowledge and wisdom. And this knowledge is about the self-illuminated Atma which is pure and uncorrupted, which is untainted and immaculate, which is eternal and truthful, and which is Consciousness personified. [When the world is eliminated, it implies that the gross body consisting of the gross organs of perception and action is also eliminated. These gross organs are the five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and the

five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital. It is through these that the Atma interacts with the world during the waking state of existence. Their removal from sight means that for all practical purposes the physical gross world has been done away with.]

This true knowledge and wisdom are the torch bearers of enlightened state of existence. It removes every trace of darkness and veils of all kinds that cover the glorious light of the Atma and prevent its shine from coming out. True knowledge also enlightens the creature about his distinct identity which is separate from the gross body called the Anna Maya Kosh consisting of the organs of perception and action, as well as the subtle body consisting of the vital winds called the Pran Maya Kosh and the mind-intellect complex called the Mana (mind) and Vigyan (intellect). Therefore, since the creature's 'true self or true identity' is the pure conscious Atma, it follows that both the gross and the subtle components of his existence are eliminated if one were to trace this 'true' identity. [When the creature is asleep, he dreams. During this stage of his existence, the outside body is asleep but the mind and its sub-conscious remain as active as before. The intellect was active when the man was awake in this world and was thinking actively, but it has a hidden role to play here in the dreaming world as well because it is the intellect that decides what the man would remember and learn that forms the basis of the data stored in the mind in the form of memory which his sub-conscious relies upon during dreams. So by erasing or eliminating the role of the mind and intellect altogether, the subtle body which covers the Atma is also removed.]

With the removal of these two bodies that had been covering the Atma like the clay pot covering the lighted lamp (as described in verse no. 15-16 and 25), it is obvious that the light of the Atma would shine through and illuminate the entire inner self of the spiritual aspirant just like the light of the lamp lighting up the surrounding area after removal of the clay pot covering it (31-32).

There is another way of interpreting the three levels of existence as done in the Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 8. It outlines the three fundamental levels in which the creation exists along with the function that are carried out by the units of that particular level. To quote—"All the different elements or individual units of consciousness that makes the creature aware of the world, interact with it, be charmed with it and remember it even while he sleeps (i.e. during the dreaming state) withdraw themselves (during the third state of consciousness called the deep sleep or Sushupta) and come to rest or retire in the Atma.

These elements that constitute the body of the creature are divided into the following categories—

[The five principal Bhuts or elements of creation.] (i) The earth and its perception in the form of smell (as all things that have the earth element as their ingredient have a natural tendency to emit a fragrance or smell, whether pleasant or otherwise); (ii) the water and its perception in the form of taste (because to taste anything the secretions of the taste buds need some fluid medium for its enzymes to interact with the chemicals in the thing tasted so as to

create the sense of taste); (iii) the sky and its perception in the form of sound (because the sound waves need space to travel and the medium of the air to be generated and transmitted in the form of waves); (iv) the wind and its perception in the form of touch (as is evident when we can feel the soft touch of the breeze blowing against the face even though no one can see the wind); (v) the fire and light (collectively called Tej) and their perception in the form of shape and form (because only visible things can be seen, and the fire provides the light to make it visible along with the energy for enabling the creature to be alive and see things—here the reference is to the sun in whose light the entire world assumes a definitive shape and form to enable it to be seen).

[The five principal organs of perception and their respective functions.] (vi) The eye and its perception in the form of sight (because it is only the eye amongst the various organs that is exclusively empowered to see anything); (vii) the ear and its perception in the form of hearing (because it is only the ear amongst the various organs that is exclusively empowered to hear sounds emanating from anything); (viii) the nose and its perception in the form of smell (because it is only the nose amongst the various organs that is exclusively empowered to smell anything); (ix) the tongue and its perception in the form of taste (because it is only the tongue amongst the various organs that is exclusively empowered to taste anything); (x) the skin and its perception in the form of touch or the sense of feeling (because it is only the skin amongst the various organs that is exclusively empowered to feel or touch anything).

[The five principal gross organs of action and their respective functions.] (xi) The hand and its function in the form of accepting or receiving anything worthy of accepting or receiving; (xii) the ability to speak and its function to speak about subjects worthy of speaking; (xiii) the genital and its function in the form of reproduction and sexual enjoyment; (xiv) the anus and its function in the form of expelling wastes from the body (which is stool); (xv) the leg and its function in the form of taking the creature or the other organs of the body to their desired destination.

[The subtle body consists of the following organs along with their respective functions.] (xvi) The Mana (mind) and its function in the form of thinking about things or subjects worth thinking about; (xvii) the Buddhi (intellect) and its function in the form of discriminating between the good and the bad, of thinking analytically and intelligently about things or subjects worth knowing about and worth pondering, contemplating, researching, analyzing, discussing and deciding about; (xviii) the Ahankar (the sense of pride and ego) and the object that breeds it along with its result (i.e. the thing about which the creature is proud, and the collateral consequences of being proud—to be arrogant and haughty); (xix) the Chitta (sub-conscious) and its object (i.e. the things that the sub-conscious mind remembers and which constantly keep on nagging the creature; the memory bank of the mind which plays a crucial role in his dreams and the way his subjective mind thinks naturally); (xx) the Tejas (the illumination in the form of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment which are the inherent qualities of the Atma) and the things or subjects that are illuminated (known, realised and understood) with the help of the light of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment; and (xxi) Pran (the vital winds in the form of life

consciousness or the vital spark of life and its evident signs in the creature) and all the elements or units that are dependent upon this Pran (i.e. the entire being of the creature except his pure 'self' known as the Atma).

Verily, all these units finally collapse and disappear into the Atma, the pure consciousness (8).

[Note—The relationship between the three basic units of creation—viz. the gross body that perceives or sees this world, the subtle body through which this perception takes place, and the actual perceiver, the Atma, can be understood with the help of a simple parable. Once a teacher asked his disciple—'Son, do you see anything?' The disciple answered—'Yes sir, I see'. The teacher—'By what light do you see?' The disciple—'Sir, by the light of the sun in the sky during the day time, and by the light of the lamp during the night'. The teacher—'By what light do you see these lights?' The disciple—'Sir, by the light present in my eyes'. The teacher—'By what light is the eye enabled to see?' The disciple—'Sir, by the light provided by the mind'. The teacher—'By what light do you know the mind, or what lights up your mind and enables it to see and interpret the sight?' The disciple—'Sir, by the light provided by my self, for no one else outside can empower my mind to think for me'. The teacher—'Well, there you are. You are the light of lights'. The enlightened disciple exulted—'Yes indeed sir, that is I; that indeed is me'.]

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 24 is very explicit in explaining these three states of existence of consciousness. To quote—"The same eclectic divine entity called the pure consciousness which is the 'truthful self' of the aspirant is known as Vishwa during the Jagrat state, as Taijas during the Swapna state, and as Pragya during the Sushupta state. Depending upon these three states of existence in which the consciousness lives at a particular moment, the same entity is given different names and exhibits different characteristics. Though the person is the same, he is known by different names and given different titles depending upon his different roles in life. [For instance, a man is a father for his son, a husband for his wife, a lord and master for his servant and vice-versa, a teacher for his student, a caring king for his subjects, and enemy for other kings, and so on and so forth.]

One can come to learn about the state of one's mind, thoughts and level of his spiritual existence by carefully examining the actions or deeds that are being done by him at any given moment. [For instance, if a man is mentally upset the way he handles any situation would be different as compared to his behaviour when his mind is composed. If a man gets mentally involved in the affairs of this material world and remains deeply involved in it, he is bound to be restless and in a state of constant flux. This would indicate his 'Vishwa' state of spiritual existence. On the other hand, if he physically remains doing something but does it in a mechanical manner while his mind is thinking of something else as is the case with some students in a classroom who cannot concentrate on the subject taught in the class because though they might be physically present there but their mind is focused somewhere else. This is the typical case of Taijas—the state of existence which is like a dream when a man does not live in the reality of the existing world and instead lives in an imaginary world which has no relevance to the present.

Finally, there is a state when a man is so focused on the job at hand that no external inputs can disturb the composure of his mind and its ability to concentrate though he is very much awake and not even day-dreaming. This is called the Pragya state when pure wisdom, erudition, learning and enlightenment are the dominant factors, the key players.]"

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 7 describes the third state of existence of consciousness, called the Sushupta or deep sleep state. Now let us see what it says—The 'sleeping state' during which the person does not desire/wish to enjoy any of the objects of this materialistic world and is neither conscious of their existence, a state when he does not even dream of any imaginary non-existent world—such a state of existence of consciousness is called 'Sushupta' or the deep sleep state of consciousness. This state is beyond the dream state, and is the third state in the hierarchy of existences in which the Atma or the pure consciousness lives. It corresponds to the third Paad or limb or aspect of the supreme Brahm who is the cosmic Consciousness personified.

Where the gross organs of the gross body represented by the organs of perception (eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin) and action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory), as well as the subtle organ represented by the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect have become defunct or stand eliminated, that eclectic state of existence of the consciousness is called Sushupta.

The body which houses this state of the Atma is called the 'causal body'. It is so-called because the Atma or pure consciousness that lives in this state is the entity that is the 'cause' of the creation of both the world of dreams in the Swapna state as well as the world of material sense objects during the Jagrat state. During this Sushupta state of consciousness, the entire world, both the real as well as the imaginary, coalesce and merge into nothingness or non-being. They are now most quietly and imperceptibly shrunk into the entity that was the 'cause' of their existence at all in the first place. That is why it is called the 'causal' body.

The wise entity that was empowered with the knowledge that enabled it to create something and then sustain it is called 'Pragya'. It lives in this causal body. This Pragya is none other than the Atma or the pure consciousness, also called the 'true self' of the creature. This Atma of the individual is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma of creation. At the individual level of the creature, it is called 'Pragya', while the same entity in its macrocosmic level is called 'Ishwar'—or the supreme Lord. It is 'Lord' as it is the central Authority that not only determines the existence of both the worlds—the Swapna as well as the Jagrat—but presides over them, enjoys what they have to offer or suffers from them, and then decides when to get rid of them.

This state of Sushupta is indicative of the dissolution of creation as nothing then remains. Then two options are available—either the Atma reverts back to the earlier two states of existence, or proceed ahead to the fourth state of Turiya which is actually a permanent state of Sushupta.

The entity living in the causal body and known as Pragya is one of its kinds; it has no duality and no parallels. It is an image of eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity, and it is wise,

enlightened, realised and truthful. It is this entity that enjoys this world of eternal bliss and tranquility. It is pure consciousness and enlightenment personified. These virtues are its 'mouth', i.e. it accepts anything using these virtues as its accepting organs. In other words, it judges the world using the yardstick of enlightened consciousness, and not the way the mind had been judging it previously. The mind has a tendency to 'fly' in the vast sky of imagination, while the intellect 'moves' on sound ground of logic and rationality. Wisdom and erudition weighs everything and makes the creature aware that what he believes to be real is actually false and misleading. This is the function of the enlightened Atma. Once the sun of wisdom and enlightenment dawns on the creature's spiritual horizon, he finds immense peace and tranquility because all ghosts and phantoms arising in the darkness created by delusions and ignorance are eliminated for good.

In terms of Vedanta, the causal body encloses the Atma which is surrounded by the bliss sheath. When this Atma is not disturbed by constant interference by the mind and the intellect, it remains oblivious of the outside world, and being comfortably ensconced in the bliss sheath, it remains blissful and peaceful.

This Pragya (wise, enlightened, knowledgeable, erudite and sagacious) aspect of the Atma, which is pure consciousness, is the symbolic third Paad or limb or aspect of Brahm.

[The Atma or the soul of the creature is trapped in a body having these three layers of the body that are like sheaths that surround the soul—the gross body (verse no. 5), the subtle body (verse no. 6) and the causal body (verse no. 7). As soon as these are dissolved or removed or done away with, the Atma enjoys a state of merger with the eternal Atma of the cosmos. Or in other words, the individual Atma of the creature becomes one with the Parmatma, the supreme transcendental Atma. This Parmatma is also known as the Supreme Being, the supreme Brahm, and the cosmic Consciousness in the form of the cosmic Soul of creation.] (7)."

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 52; Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13, and Canto 3, verse nos. 17-18 describe the concept of Sushupta as follows—

"Canto 1, verse no. 52 = The Sushupta state (or the 'deep sleep state) of consciousness is on the threshold of the Turiya state; it precedes the Turiya state and is very close to it.

When the Mana (mind) and Ahankar (ego, pride) dissolve (i.e. when both the mind that harbours ego, and the ego that influences the working of the mind, are made ineffective, are neutralized) it is then that the aspirant is said to have reached the Sushupta state.

[The Sushupta state of existence is the deep sleep state that comes after the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness. In this state the mind and the sub-conscious are both defunct. The difference between the Sushupta and Turiya states is that the creature reverts to the Swapna state from the Sushupta state, but when he reaches the Turiya state this reversal does not happen. That is why the Turiya state is likened to Samadhi while the Sushupta state isn't.] (52)."

"Canto 2, verse nos. 12-13 = The state of the Chitta (sub-conscious mind; the ability of the mind to pay attention and remember events) when it is neutral, non-active or dormant so much so that it does not register any of the constant inputs received by the mind from the external world through the medium of the sense organs of perception of the body, is said to be equivalent to being in the deep sleep state of existence, called the Sushupta state, inspite of the creature remaining awake and active in this world, the state known as Jagrat state.

In other words, when the mind and the sub-conscious become un-interested in being involved with the body and the world at large, the creature finds the same peace and rest that he would find when he is sleeping peacefully without a worry in the world.

[The deep sleep state is when the mind is defunct; it ceases to function. The waking state is when the mind is fully active and the creature is actively involved in the world. So, in the situation when the mind fails to register what is happening around it, when it becomes uninterested in what the body does, it would be equivalent to the mind being in a virtual deep sleep state. It is said that the creature finds true rest and peace in the deep sleep state or the Sushupta state because both the physical body as well as the mind are resting. In the present context, the creature finds rest because the mind had stopped nagging him and can peacefully enjoy the nectar of bliss that drips from the realisation of the consciousness residing in his inner-self, in his bosom.] (12).

Oh Nidagh! The subtle Sushupta state of the mind and sub-conscious (when they are inactive and defunct for all practical purposes even though the creature might be physically awake as described in verse no. 12 above) is achieved and made steady by constant practice.

When the Sushupta state is ripe and perpetual, it is known as the 'Turiya' state. This is what those who are experts in the essence of metaphysics assert (13)."

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 11 says that the same Atma, the pure consciousness, prevails in all the three states of existence, viz. the Jagrat, the Swapna and the Sushupta. It is only when the Atma crosses these three states and enters the fourth state (i.e. the Turiya state) that it can find final and full liberation and deliverance.

The fact that the Atma continues to oscillate between the three states of Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta has been elaborately explained in the (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 16-18, 34-35; and (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 11; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse nos. 12-14; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 93/12-93/15; Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 20-21.

(d) Then comes the 4th state of existence of the Atma, and it is known as *Turiya* state. This state is reached when the third state becomes a perpetual phenomenon instead of being only a temporary phase. Once this state of Turiya is reached then even though the man might wake from sleep and appears to be going about his normal duties in a routine manner in this world, his pure consciousness remains aloof and distanced from the sense organs of perception and actions as well as from the mind. This is the 'transcendental state' of existence of

consciousness, and it goes beyond the third state of Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness. Here the spiritual aspirant lives in a state of perpetual Samadhi. That is, he remains in a constant state of blissfulness and meditation though he lives in this physical world and goes about his normal affairs like an ordinary man.

During this 4th state called 'Turiya', the Atma acquires all the characters of the earlier three stages, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleeping states in their individual form as well as in a combined and composite way. In this state of spiritual existence, the consciousness exhibits all the traits of the earlier three states at the same time along with the unique traits which would obviously be a net result of the combined affect of all the individual traits that are so unique to each of thee three earlier states of existence consciousness—viz. the waking state, the dreaming state, and the deep sleep state.

The 4th state of existence of the consciousness or Atma is also called the 'Turiya Chaitanya state'. In this state, the creature exists in its purest form as the pure consciousness which is undiluted, uninterrupted and unpolluted by any impulses or inputs from the external world. This results in its pristine and immaculate from as 'consciousness' to shine through (much like the flame of the candle which shines with all its brightness and splendour once the tainted glass covering around it is removed). This consciousness is the true 'self' of the creature and its real identity.

Thus, it is the Atma or the pure consciousness as the true 'self' of the creature that is the witness of the existence of the other three states in which the creature lives. This 'self' or Atma is imperishable and without a birth or beginning. This is because the other three states continue to appear and disappear in a rhythmic cycle as the creature wakes up to face the world after his phase of sleep is over, only to go back to sleep again when it is exhausted, and wake up again refreshed and rejuvenated from sleep. But the fourth state is like the Sun in the sky which is steady and shines constantly upon the world and lights it up. This Sun is unaffected by anything happening in this world and to this world, and remains completely dispassionate and detached from anything mundane and terrestrial. Nights and days appear and disappear in a cyclic manner, but the Sun remains the same. During the night it is erroneously assumed that the Sun is no more, but as science has proved the Sun is there in the sky though it might not be visible to the creature during that period of time called the 'night' as it is shining on the outer side of the globe. The day is comparable to the waking state of consciousness, the moon-light night to the dreaming state of consciousness when a man is able to see this world but with a different light, while the dark night when nothing is visible is comparable to the deep sleep state of consciousness when nothing of the external world is visible.

The Turiyateet state of existence has been elaborately described also in Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 4.

The *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 21 describes the Turiya state as follows—"To remain deeply engrossed in the thoughts of the pure consciousness which is the true self of the spiritual seeker, meditating upon it to the exclusion of all other things, is known as the Turiya state of existence. This is therefore the

transcendental state of existence of the creature.

If the inner-self is likened to the Sun, the esoteric and mystical entity that lends this Sun its power to give brilliant light, energy and heat, which gives the Sun its glorious dynamism, is known as 'Hans'. [In other words, it is the self-illuminated Atma hidden invisibly inside the dark gross body of the creature that inspires the latter and lights up his world for him just like the celestial ball known as the 'Sun' is illuminated and made incandescent from the inside by the nuclear reaction taking place in its core which supplies the ball of the Sun with its light and heat, or its 'fire'. This Atma which is self-illuminated and which lends its 'light', or consciousness that translates into 'life' of the creature, is known as Hans.]

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 107, 108-112 elucidates upon the chief characteristic features of the Turiya state of existence as follows—

"Verse no. 107 = Do not harbour thoughts that a particular thing is truthful, good and auspicious, and the other is not. Become totally dispassionate and neutral towards everything. Develop equanimity and train your mind to remain even, calm, serene, detached and steady under all circumstances.

A person who has developed and practices such high level of detachment and dispassion is the one who lives a life in the Turiya state. That is, he lives a life of transcendental existence by rising above mundane and gross considerations, and instead dwelling at a sublime plane of existence. He is able to translate the theoretical aspects of Turiya state of existence of consciousness into a practical way of life.

[That is, inspite of living in a gross world and allowing his body to do the necessary things as expected of him, he remains aloof from and untainted by any of the things of this gross world and its numerous deluding temptations.] (107).

"Verse no. 109 = The Turya (i.e. the transcendental) state of exalted existence is neither the Jagrat state (or waking state) nor the Swpana state (or dreaming state)—because during the Turiya state there is no trace of any kind of Sankalps at all. [The Sankalps are the various volitions, vows, firm desires and determinations that a creature makes in relation to the gross world and its numerous sense objects as well as various achievements and fulfillments that are to be attained in this world. This situation prevails only as long as the creature is aware of the world; he desires fruits that accrue to him by voluntarily getting involved in doing various deed with an avowed aim of attaining success in fulfilling his desires in this world. When the mind and the sub-conscious become defunct during the Turiya state of existence, the world and its material attractions simply cease to exist and matter. For all practical purposes, a creature who has reached the transcendental state of Turiya is as good as dead vis-à-vis the world. He neither is concerned with the physical world that prevails in the Jagrat or waking state, or the imaginary world that exists in the Swapna or dreaming state.]

The Turiya state is not even the Sushupta state of existence (i.e. the deep sleep state) because in the latter case the creature lies like a gross and lifeless log of wood. [During the Sushpta state he neither thinks nor imagines. Since the mind is defunct, he does not perceive anything of the world, he does not have to apply his intelligence either to analyse them and

make deductions and choices. At the same time, his sub-conscious is asleep, so that he does not even file away any sort of information in his memory bank for future referral either. But the Turiya state is not lifeless and gross like the condition that prevails during the Sushupta state—for in the Turiya state he is very much alert and active, but this is limited to his physical body and that aspect of the mind that is concerned with routine mundane affairs. His inner-self, his sub-conscious and subtle mind is not at all involved in what his physical body does and remain immune to all the sensory impulses gathered by the sense organs of perception. So in effect it means that he would appear to be going about his life in a routine manner like other compatriots, but internally he is neither involved nor aware of anything. Thus, he is peaceful and calm inspite of being surrounded by the torrent of existential problems in this world.] (109).

"Verse no. 110 = Those who are of a calm, controlled and stable mind, temperament and demeanours, those who are truly wise, enlightened, sagacious and erudite see the physical world in which they live in the same way that they would see it in a Truiya (transcendental) state of existence.

[That is, they do not get involved in anything related to this gross world of deluding material charms; they do not allow their inner-self to be at all influenced by any of the tainting and deluding effects of the world despite living in it in an ordinary manner and participating in its activities in a normal manner; they do not get entangled in anything in this world, and remain aloof and distanced from them at all levels of existence, viz. the emotional, the sentimental, the intellectual, as well as both the active and subtle levels of the mind which includes the sub-conscious.

They do not shun the world and run away from their duties and responsibilities, but their inner-self remains fully anchored to the peace and tranquility that such wise and enlightened men have acquired for themselves. They are not affected by the world in the least; they do not lose their calm and poise under any circumstance; they treat the world and its material sense objects as being virtually non-existent at the level of their mind and sub-conscious. Thus, it really does not matter to them whether or not the world exists, whether or not they interact with it or perform various deeds in it.

They have realised that it is the gross body that actually lives and comes in contact with the equally gross world, and that their 'true self' is not the body but the pure conscious Atma which is immaculate and independent of both the body and the world. It is the body that does deeds and interacts with the body, it is the body that either suffers or enjoys the material charms and pleasures of the world, and not the Atma. The world is transient, unsteady, changing and perishable like the body, but the Atma is unlike them both. So, a wise man lives in a transcendental state of Turiya all the time. He treats the world and everything else with marked stoic neutrality, indifference, detachment and dispassion. His calmness and composure is never disturbed or affected.]

On the other hand is a man who is ignorant and deluded. He treats this body as his 'self' and this world as true. Therefore, he is submerged in this ever-changing and unfaithful world that is as deluding and entrapping, is tossed and kicked around by its surging waves of

miseries and torments, and is made miserable and restless by the body's never-ending demands and sufferings. He loses his peace and calmness; he is never steady and composed (110).

"Verse no. 111 = When all Ahankar (pride and ego) is extinguished, when one develops a high degree of equanimity, fortitude and neutrality as well as an evenness of mind and demeanours, and when all the mischief, restlessness and wayward tendencies of the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) are reined in—it is then the creature is said to have achieved the Turiya (transcendental) state of existence (111).

"Verse no. 112 = It is an unequivocal opinion or proclamation of all the scriptures that when all Maya (delusions) and Avidya (ignorance) are eliminated, what remains is indeed the Truth. It corresponds to the transcendental supreme state of existence which is absolutely calm, peaceful, composed, serene and tranquil, as well as the state when there is no perplexity, consternation, confusion, bewilderment and doubt. This state is verily the exalted state of Brahm-realisation (112)."

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 64, describes what the practical implication of this Turiya state of consciousness is. To quote—

"Verse no. 64 = The dream that is long lasting is the cause of all hallucinations and delusory perceptions of the world. It takes a man away from the reality. Hence, a man who drags on his imaginary world of dreams which are shorn of any reality into the real world never finds happiness no matter how hard he tries. [For instance, if a man begins to 'day dream', if he does not get back to his routine daily life after waking up from sleep and continues to brood over things seen in the dream though he knows fully well that he is wasting his time by such thoughts as they were mere dreams and have no relevance in practical life, then such a man is deemed to be 'mentally ill'. He would never find peace because what he sees in practice has no relevance to what he saw in his dreams. For example, if a man dreams that he is a king rolling in worldly comforts and pleasures while actually he is manual labourer, and if he carries this dream into his practical life, it is clearly obvious that he will never find peace. He would be perpetually depressed and become a mental wreck. Besides this, the very fact that he saw a dream of being a king shows that he has harboured a hidden desire of being a king, because dreams are a replay of the sub-conscious mind. How can desires that are obviously impractical to be ever fulfilled give peace? They would, on the contrary, snatch whatever peace the man had.]

Similarly, the material world of sense objects in which a man allows his mind to remain engrossed in for a prolonged time also becomes the cause of all his pains and agonies (much like the case of carrying over the dreams into the practical life).

So a wise, erudite and enlightened man should realise the benefits of the Sushupta state of existence when there is great peace and bliss, and endeavour to emulate this state even during the waking state of existence in this world. In other words, when he has woken up from the deep sleep state of consciousness into the waking state, he should remember only Brahm as the pure cosmic Consciousness, as the universal Truth, as the one eternal source of infinite bliss and peace that can give eternal calmness and tranquility that the man had experienced

during the deep sleep state of Sushupta. [This is also called the 'Turiya state of consciousness'. This he can achieve by controlling the mind and preventing it form becoming engrossed in this world. He uses the mind in a routine manner and does not allow it to register anything in its sub-consciousness. This will pre-empt any dreams and mental aberrations.] (64)."

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 8 describes the fourth state of existence of consciousness, called the Turiya or the state that transcends the Sushupta state. Now let us see what it says— The supreme Atma or Consciousness that exists beyond the third state of Sushupta, i.e. that state of consciousness which transcends the earlier three states related to this world, is said to be the fourth Paad or aspect of Brahm. It is called the Turiya state.

The Atma that exists in this fourth state called the Turiya or transcendental state is the one that is said to be the creator or progenitor of the other three states. [When the pure consciousness decides that it wishes to interact with the world, it would have to retrace the path followed by it to reach this higher spiritual state of Turiya—i.e. it would have to pass through all the three stages mentioned in verse no. 5-7. But if it decides to get rid of the world and find eternal peace, it will not do so. Then in such a case, the person who has reached this fourth state of consciousness, called the Turiya, would remain in this world like other men do, but would be a totally changed and transformed man—he would be totally immune to this world and its charms and temptations, as well as its pains, miseries and sufferings. He would seem to be awake and going about his normal duties, but internally he would be in the state of deep sleep, not at all being aware of or interested in what the body, both its gross components as well as its subtle components, do. He would be virtually 'sleep walking' as far as the world is concerned. All the characteristics that are enumerated below in this verse are of the Turiya state of consciousness.]

The Atma in this Turiya or fourth state of existence is called the 'Parmatma' or the supreme Atma—for now it is not an ordinary Atma of the creature that is affected by the deluding influences of the world, but beyond such considerations. It is also known as the 'Ishwar' or the Lord of the creation—for now it has reached the state when it no longer relates it's self with the mundane world of material sense objects, it does not wish its comforts and pleasures, but has risen high up to occupy a much exalted stature that makes it 'superior' to all the rest in creation. Such a high Atma is Parmatma and it is also the Ishwar or Lord of creation. It is called 'Ishwar' because it is the undisputed Lord of all that exists. It is this Atma that has not only created everything but also enjoys them and eliminates them should it want to do so. In other words, if a wise man so wishes and is firmly determined, then he can easily forgo the attractions of the world in a moment by just making a firm decision that he is not interested in them. This world exists only because the Atma, or the consciousness which is the 'true self' of a creature, wishes it to exist.

[According to Vedanta, Ishwar represents the sum-total of all the causal bodies in this creation. This is because Ishwar is the 'cause' of coming into being of whatever that exists in this creation. Anything, no matter how inconsequential and miniscule, that has an existence

owes its presence to the Ishwar. It is like the case of line or any other figure drawn on a piece of paper. Its origin is in the first 'dot' that was formed when the tip of the pen had first touched the paper. The line or the figure is merely an extension of this dot. If the line is retracted and seeks its original point it will come back to this dot. If there is no dot, the line cannot be drawn. Similarly, everything in this world has its origin in this single 'Ishwar', and the rest is simply an extension of this Ishwar.]

The supreme macrocosmic Atma, the cosmic Consciousness, is the Soul or essence or the Tattwa of creation, and like its counterpart present in the causal body of the individual creature, it is also Pragya—i.e. it is wise, enlightened, awake, conscious, realised, intelligent, sagacious and erudite.

This Parmatma is all-knowing and omniscient as it lives inside the secret inner chambers of the creation in the form of the Atma of all the creatures. Being an 'insider', he knows everything; he is privy to the inner thoughts and ideas of the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect of the creature; nothing is hidden or out of sight of him.

Being a resident inside the bosom of all the creatures in the form of their Atma, and being all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent by the virtue of it being the most subtle and sublime entity known as 'consciousness' in creation, this Parmatma is known as 'Antaryaami'—one who lives inside everything and knows even that which is not known to the outside world.

Parmatma or the cosmic Atma is the cause of everything in existence—hence it is the 'supreme Creator'. It is this Atma that is the origin of all the Bhuts (elements), their sustenance and growth, and their final resting place. [This can be easily visualized by a simple illustration. When we wish to draw any figure on paper—say a line or a circle, we use a pencil or pen which makes a 'dot' at the spot where it first touches the paper. This 'dot' is then virtually stretched in all imaginable directions on the surface of the paper to make the desired shapes visualized by the mind—whether it is a circle or a triangle. If we retrace the lines the way they were drawn, we come back to the original dot. This symbolically depicts the way the creation is regressed.]

Since the Parmatma (Supreme Being) is 'consciousness' itself personified, it follows that he does not need any other thing to be the cause of his own origin—simply because it is 'consciousness' that makes 'life' possible in creation, it is 'consciousness' that magically transforms a lifeless gross body into an active and vigorous creature. If 'consciousness' is removed from this world, the latter would be absolutely worthless and lifeless. Left to its own accord, this world would not be able to remain alive or revive its self in case 'consciousness' decides to abandon it. This quintessential factor of life in this creation is known as the 'Atma'.

The cosmic Atma or the cosmic Consciousness is a complete neutral entity and characterized by paradoxes. For instance, it is neither introvert nor extrovert. It is an embodiment and a fount of wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity and knowledge on the one hand, but ironically the same Atma appears to exhibit the opposite virtues by allowing it's self to be accompanied or engulfed by Maya (delusions) that has helped this Atma to create the world of artificialty and entrapments.

This cosmic Atma is all-knowing as well as ignorant. It is omniscient on the one hand, but remains indifferent and neutral to all forms of knowledge on the other hand. It remains merely a mute spectator, a mere witness and a neutral observer of all that is happening around it, giving the impression that it is gross, blockhead, ignorant and dumb. Its neutral and dispassionate state is often misinterpreted in this wrong way. The neutrality of the Atma is due to the fact that it is renunciation and dispassion personified; it remains indifferent to all delusions and hallucinations that are the hallmarks of this creation. But since it has to remain in this world, it appears to be influenced by all the taints and shortcomings that characterize this world.

This state of the Atma whereby it appears to exhibit dual characteristics which lead to confusions about its truthful form and nature as a subime and subtle entitity that is free from all grossness and delusions is known as the Jagrat as well as the Swapna states of consciousness depending upon the level of grossness or subtlety exhibited by the Atma respectively. This happens because during both these two states of existence, the Atma appears to be involved headon in the affairs of the world, whether this involvement is at the physical level of the gross world as it happens during the Jagrat state, or at the subtle level as it happens during the Swapna state.

The same Consciousness is uniformly and universally present in all the creatures of creation as their Atma, and in fact the entire creation is nothing but its image, but still each individual creature is unique and different from the other. Many factors that are extraneous to the Atma—such as the characteristic attributes of the gross body, the presence of the various Gunas in different and varying proportions, the level of mental and intellectual development, the Vasanas and Vrittis (inbuilt desires and passions, as well as natural tendencies and inclinations) that an individual possesses—go collectively to make an individual unique inspite of the same Atma living in them. [A person fights others as if they were different from his own self, and there is so much diversity and dichotomy in creation that it becomes impossible to reconcile what is said in the Upanishads and what is actually observed in the practical world.]

The Atma is said to be almighty so much so that its mere wish can create and destroy the world, but ironically it requires the aid of the 'Shakti' or energy and power and dynamism of Nature to do anything at all. [This is best understood by the story of Ramayana itself. Lord Ram was Brahm personified, and therefore he should have killed the demon king Ravana by mere wish, instead of having to go to Lanka to do so. Then there are versions of Ramayana, such as the Adbhut Ramayana of Valmiki and Adhyatma Ramayana of Veda Vyas which tell how it was Sita, an incarnation of Brahm's Shakti, that had actually helped the Lord accomplish the astounding deeds that he is credited for.]

This Atma is so small and subtle as well as sublime that it cannot be heard, seen, felt, touched, smelt or held. It is not an object that can be used in the conventional sense a man uses other entities of creation.

The Atma has no attributes, qualifications and dimensions that can be quantified and measured. It has never been visibly seen or observed, it has never been practically used and experimented with, and it has never been comprehended, grasped or caught either by the

mind-intellect complex or by the sense organs of perception and action.

The Atma has no specific characteristics, qualities, virtues or attributes that can be used to define and qualify it. It is such a miraculous and inexplicable entity that it cannot be incorporated as a subject that can comprehended by deep research and ponderings. It is beyond the purview of thought, imagination, intellect and conception. [That is, this supreme entity cannot be reduced to any physical matter that can be researched and experimented in a laboratory. It cannot be made a subject to be judged by the calculating mind which has a natural tendency to reduce everything to logic and rationality.]

The Atma cannot be even indicated or represented by indirect methods, such as by the use of signs, formulas, symbolism, metaphors, similes, analogues and examples. The only holistic and comprehensive proof of its existence and truthfulness is the ethereal experience that one has upon attaining self-realisation obtained when one reaches the higher states of super conscious existence known as the state of Samadhi. It is experienced only by attained and self-realised seekers. This supreme, ethereal, divine and holy entity is completely devoid of any delusions and falsehoods, any deceit and artificiality.

The Atma cannot be comprehended as it is beyond the scope of the mind and intellect. There is nothing in existence that can be used to compare the Atma with. There is no sign that can be used to indicate anything about the Atma. The only way to know the Atma is to 'experience and witness its presence' in the form of the 'super consciousness', and other vital life-factors of existence such as the Pran (or the vital winds). [That is, if one was to search an entity known as the Atma with the help of certain characters or virtues, no matter how great and magnificent they may be, one would fail in his search. This is because the Atma is extremely subtle and sublime by nature, and it has no grossness and density whatsoever that can be perceived by the sense organs of the body, including the mind and the intellect. That is why it is said that the Atma is beyond comprehension and reach of the sense organs of the creature. However, the existence of the Atma can be experienced during higher levels of existence which are in consonance with the plane in which the Atma actually exists. It is just like the case of modern radio communication where one can listen to a particular station only when he is tuned to that frequency.]

It is absolutely calm, peaceful, serene and tranquil; it is beautiful and auspicious; it is the ultimate Truth and Reality; it is the benevolent benefactor of all and provides all auspiciousness and welfares (i.e. it is 'Shiva').

Such a unique, divine, incomprehensible and incomparable cosmic Consciousness is regarded by those who are wise and in the know of things as the 'Advaita Brahm'. This Brahm is an eternal, majestic, powerful, sublime, fascinating, almighty and stupendously magnificent entity.

[That is, the supreme entity known as Brahm has unique and apparently paradoxical characteristics enumerated here. This makes Brahm one of its kinds, because it is impossible to duplicate them. Advaita means non-dual. Hence the Brahm that is unique and without parallel is 'Advaita'. The Brahm that is uniform and universal, that is irrefutably and unequivocally one,

and not two, inspite of the countless forms in which it has revealed itself in this creation—is 'Advaita'. The Brahm that is both visible as well as invisible, that is here as well as there—is known as 'Advaita Brahm'. The Brahm that is in the present as it was in the past, and would remain the same in the future—is 'Advaita Brahm'.]

Those who are well-versed in the essence of all spiritual and metaphysical knowledge, those who are blessed with wisdom and erudition of the highest order that has enabled them to have deep insight into the fundamental universal truth of everything in creation in its essential form, call this supreme transcendental Truth and the ultimate Reality of creation as 'Brahm' and the 'cosmic Atma' or 'Consciousness'. It is the fourth Paad or limb or step or form of Brahm.

In other words, the wisdom to understand what has been said of Brahm in this verse is the fourth and the last step to realise the truthful and essential nature of the supreme transcendental Brahm, about the Atma, about the pure consciousness that exists at both the macrocosmic as well as the microcosmic levels of creation at the same time. The fourth Paad of Brahm is the latter's cosmic transcendental form that goes beyond the gross and the ordinary level of the subtle that borders the gross level of existence. It corresponds to the higher level of existence of super consciousness that is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent, that is all-knowing and omniscient, that is almighty and supreme. [This fourth Paad is equivalent to the Turiya state of consciousness because it transcends the mundane and moribund existence of the Atma in this physical gross body that is bound to this physical gross world of material sense objects, thereby forcing the otherwise eternally free, ethereal, sublime and subtle Atma (the consciousness) to lead a trapped and deluded existence as long as it remains confined to this gross body and attracted to the gross world. and forced to live in and interact with.] (8)."

The *Sarwasaar Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 4 very beautifully describes the four states of existence. To quote--

"The living creature has fourteen instruments or organs in its body, such as the 'Mana' etc.[1] by which it perceives the existence of the gross external material world in the form of various stimuli emanating from the latter's sense objects. The state of consciousness which 'illuminates' the world for the creature, or makes it possible for the creature to be able to perceive the external material world of sense objects by its various sense organs much like the Sun illuminating the earth and making its objects visible, is called the creature's 'Jagrat state' or the waking state of consciousness. This is the first state of existence of the consciousness and it enables the creature to receive the world through the various sense perceptions which have their origin in the sense objects of the external world, such as the inputs of sound known as the perception of hearing etc. [The others being—the inputs of feeling known as the perception of touch, the inputs of shape, forms and colours known as the perception of sight, the inputs of various odours and fragrances that are grouped together and titillate the olfactory organs to produce the perception of smell, and the inputs of different chemicals which manifest themselves as the perception of taste.]

When the creature sleeps, the gross organs of perceptions (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) become inactive, and therefore the creature does not receive any impulses from the

outside world. But the various 'Vasanas' or worldly passions, desires, yearnings, aspirations, greed, hopes and expectations that the creature has accumulated while in its waking state of consciousness are carried over to this state of sleeping state because though the gross body is virtually inactive, the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex is very much active and agile. So, it creates its own world of imaginations, called the 'Swapna state of existence' or the dreaming state, which is often more fascinating, colourful, mysterious and majestic as well as more potent and far-reaching in its import than the physical world during the waking state of consciousness. [This is because during the waking state, the creature was constrained by the limits imposed by the grossness of the physical body, whereas during the dreaming state no such barriers exist as the interior mind and intellect are subtle instruments of the body as compared to the external organs of perceptions and actions of this body.] This is the second state of existence of the consciousness.

When the sleep progresses further, a stage is reached when the subtle mind-intellect instrument of the creature also become inactive and immune to all perceptions much like their gross cousins, the physical external organs of the gross body, and this state of consciousness is called 'Sushupta state' or the deep sleep state of consciousness. During this state, the creature does not even dream of anything, and there is complete state of oblivion which is tantamount to bliss and peace. This is the third state of existence of the consciousness.

Finally comes the fourth state of existence of the consciousness called the 'Turiya Chaitanya state' or the transcendental state of pure conscious existence which goes beyond the third stage. In this state, the creature exists in its purest form as the pure consciousness which is undiluted, uninterrupted and unpolluted by any impulses or inputs from the external world. This results in its pristine and immaculate from as 'consciousness' to shine through (much like the flame of the candle which shines with all its brightness and splendour once the tainted glass covering around it is removed). This consciousness is the true 'self' of the creature and his real identity. Thus, it is the 'self' as pure consciousness that is the witness of the existence of the other three states of existence of the creature. This 'self' is imperishable and without a birth or beginning. [This is because the other three states continue to appear and disappear in a rhythmic cycle as the creature wakes up to face the world after his phase of sleep is over, only to go back to sleep again when it is exhausted, and wake up again refreshed and rejuvenated from sleep. But the fourth state is like the Sun in the sky which shines on the world and lights it up, making it visible to the creature. This Sun is unaffected by anything happening in and to this world, and remains completely dispassionate and detached from anything mundane and terrestrial. Nights and days appear and disappear in a cyclic manner, but the Sun remains the same. During the night it is erroneously assumed that the Sun is no more, but as science has proved the Sun is there in the sky though it might not be visible to the creature during that period of time called the 'night' as it is shining on the outer side of the globe. This 'self' is called the Kutastha of verse no. 10.]

Thus it is observed that the creature's 'self' or pure consciousness has four states of existence (4).

[Note—[1]The fourteen organs or instruments of the body by which the creature perceives the external world in which it lives are the following—one Mana or the faculty of the mind, one Buddhi or the faculty of the intellect, one Chitta or the faculty of the memory, the sub-conscious mind, and the power to focus and fix attention, one Ahankar or the sense of pride in the body and its achievements as well as its stupendous abilities, five organs of perceptions such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive.]"

The *Kaivalya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 12-14 describes these four states as follows—

"Verse no. 12 = It is the same universal consciousness known as the Atma which has assumed the role of a deluded creature. In this role it becomes subservient to Maya or the power of creating delusions that is as integral to creation as the opposite power of enlightenment that cuts through this Maya[1].

Once the Atma has assumed the role of a deluded creature overcome by ignorance, it is known as the 'Jiva-Atma'. In this role it assumes that the body—which however is gross and perishable by nature as opposed to the subtle, sublime and imperishable nature of the pure form of the Atma—is its 'real self'. This is the basic misconception and error that he makes; this is the fundamental mistake which becomes the cause of all other misconceptions and delusions.

With this fundamental erroneous premise, the Jiva-Atma begins to do all sorts of deeds and get involved in them. [This is because the deeds are done by the physical body, and when under false impressions the Atma thinks that its 'self' is the body, it is natural that it gets linked to and involved with those deeds.] It enjoys the company of a woman and eats and drinks as well during its waking state called the Jagrat state of consciousness. It gets satisfaction with such service and enjoys them (12).

[Note—[1]This stanza establishes that both the good and the bad co-exist in this creation. Both the opposite qualities are necessary to maintain the balance or equilibrium in creation so that the wheel cycle of creation continues to rotate. For instance, if there was no Maya or delusions and attractions towards falsehoods and material world of sense objects then all the creatures would become wise and enlightened, resulting in their non-involvement with this world and its activities. Then what would happen—there would be no generation of wealth and there would be no material progress; there would be no discoveries because people would be self-contented and satisfied with whatever they have; there would be no desire to propagate and procreate because these activities create passions and lust; etc. On the other hand, if there was no such concept as wisdom and enlightenment, no auspiciousness and righteousness, then the world would sink into the cauldron of vices and evil which in their turn would scorch the world to ashes and the creatures would beat each other to pulp even for the most unimportant of issues.

Besides the influence of Maya upon the world and the creatures that live in it there are other factors that help to maintain this balance and aid in the continuance of the

turning of the wheel of creation and destruction in a perpetual manner—such as the presence of the three Gunas which are the inherent qualities present in all the creatures in more or less quantity that determine each creature's character, temperament, behaviour, nature and personality. These three Gunas are Sata, Raja and Tama. The Sata is the best of the three qualities and creates a propensity for goodness, holiness, nobility and auspiciousness. The Raja creates a desire for the world and to remain involved in its progress, development, protection and sustenance. The Tama is the lowest of the three and creates negative tendencies such as the propensity for committing sins and misdemeanors. They also help to maintain a balance much like the presence of Maya.

From the perspective of the Atma, the Maya and the Gunas appear to affect it for the simple reason that the Atma lives in the gross body of the creature which is affected by them though the Atma itself is totally detached and independent from all them. It is like the case of the flame of a lantern that is surrounded by a tainted glass which would affect not only how the flame appears to be but also how it gives its light.

Thus, the same Atma appears to be differently hued in different creatures.]

"Verse no. 13 = During the dreaming state of consciousness called the Swapna state, the same Jiva-Atma constructs its own world of fantasy in which it lives in the same way as it had done when it was in the earlier state of Jagrat (waking). This imaginary world gives the Jiva-Atma the same sorrow and happiness that it had been experiencing while awake. [In other words, it thinks that the world of dreams is for real. This very notion is sufficient to prove that it is hallucinating.]

In the deep sleep state of consciousness called the Sushupta state, all the delusions created by Maya[1] and its characteristic Tama Guna[2] are dispelled and expunged, resulting in real peace and tranquility for the Jiva-Atma[3] (13).

[Note—[1]The concept of Maya has been elaborately desciribed in s no. 16 of this appendix.

[2]Tama Guna—The three Gunas and their effect on the creature have been elucidated in great detail in s no. 6 of this appendix. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular 'nature' of an individual giving him his individuality and his special characters which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process et al.

[3]All the negativity that is associated with the Tama Guna which is synonymous with Maya are dispensed with in the third state of existence of consciousness called the Sushupta state. This is because in this state both the gross body consisting of the organs of action and perception as well as the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex have become defunct. Only the pure consciousness exists in the causal body, surrounded by the bliss sheath. As the name suggests anything that gives 'bliss' must be free from agitations and negativity. Therefore, the Atma must be free from all agitations and negativity associated with either the Maya or the Gunas that are limited to the body. These two only taint the outer sheaths that surround the Atma, and not its own true nature and form much like the case of the fire which always remains immaculate and pure inspite of all sorts of impurities and rubbish being thrown into it. These impurities might affect the colour of the fire for some time, they might even produce smoke for a while and appear to affect the brightness of the fire, but as soon as these impurities are

reduced to ashes the brightness and splendour of the fire remerges with its original glory. If we cite the example of the Sun we find that there are 'spots' on the Sun's disc, but upon closer examination we find that these spots are in its atmosphere and not in its core which is a cauldron of brilliantly burning fire. Similarly, whatever spots that might appear on the Atma are all superfluous and caused by the fact that this Atma lives in a gross body having numerous taints, but they never affect its original core form as Consciousness.

The concept of the Jiva Atma has been explained in the Brahm Vidya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda.]

"Verse no. 14 = After sometime, the Jiva-Atma reverts back to the state of consciousness from which it had gone to this deep sleep state of being free from all delusions because it is being constantly buffeted by the hangover and the rebounding affect of the deeds done by it during its earlier state of awareness of the world when it was in the waking state of consciousness, as well as the accumulated burden of pre-conditioned erroneous notions of its self as being the body instead of the pure consciousness which it had inherited form its previous lives.

The combined effect is that the Jiva-Atma once again wakes up into this world and plunges head-on in doing deeds and getting involved in them in its attempt to find peace and happiness, forgetting in the melee that just a while ago it had indeed found that peace and happiness in its deep sleep state called the Sushupta state of existence.

In this way, the Jiva-Atma exists in three places or planes during these three states of its existence. These three places are like the three bodies in which it resides during these three phases or planes of its existence. They are called the gross body which relates to its waking state, the subtle body which relates to its dreaming state, and the causal body which relates to its deep sleep state[1].

It is because the creature's Atma erroneously and fallaciously assumes that it has three lives, and not one stable uniform existence, that he is subjected to all forms of perplexities and confusions. It is this basic fault of perception that is at the root cause of all the mysteries and strange confusions that the creature encounters.

The consciousness that is the 'cause' of all this maverick world of delusions is itself free from all delusion[2]. It is in its self a fountain of bliss and happiness; it is wise and wholesome; it is undiluted and uniform enlightenment.

In the final analysis, when the seeker of Absolute Truth personified by Brahm realises this fact, all the three levels or bodies in which the Atma was assumed to be present collapse and merge themselves into one unit which has no fractured existence and no separate characters. That is, for a self-realised man, the only body that matters is the one that harbours the Atma and which is the causal body as it is the one which is the 'cause' of all that exists (14).

[Note—[1]The three states of existence of the Atma and the three relevant bodies have been explained in detail in s no. 3 of this appendix. Some diagrams have been appended at the end of this appendix to further aid understanding of this concept.

The erroneous perception of the Jiva Atma that it exists in these planes instead of one non-dual state that is universal, immutable and constant is at the root of all its

problems. Had the creature realised that its 'true self' is the pure consciousness and not the body it would not have been buffeted by so many notions and perceptions that add to its confusions, leading to perplexities and consternation. The realised Jiva Atma would not be tossed between happiness and joys on the one hand, and miseries and sorrows on the other hand.

[2]Anything that has life can act and dream, for a dead entity does neither of these two things. This fact itself proves that there must be something that is the 'cause' of creating all this illusion just like there must be a magician who creates all sorts of illusions on stage during a show. This hidden entity, like the magician, is the pure consciousness ensconced in the 'causal body' of the creature as its Atma. This is precisely why the abode of the pure consciousness is called 'casual' because it is the 'cause' of all that exists, including the magical world of delusions.]"

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition describes the eclectic concept of Turiya in its Canto 1, verse nos. 27, 29, 51-52; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16; and Canto 3, verse nos. 17-18. Now let us see what these verses say on this subject—

"Canto 1, verse nos. 27, 29, 51-52 = By diligently practicing control of the mind for a long time by doing various Aasans (sitting postures) and other meditative techniques of Yoga (such as Pranayam or breath control, Bandhas or closing all exposure of the mind to the turmoil of the external world, etc.), one is able to become aware of the 'truth' of the presence of the pure consciousness inside one's own self as well as is able to get rid of the various Bhrams (delusions, misconceptions, illusionary sights and their causes as described in verse nos. 13-16 above) that are associated with this life. In other words, one is able to ascertain the 'truth' and do away with the falsehood. In fact, when the 'truth' dawns on one's mental horizon, the darkness of falsehood is automatically dispelled. He is then able to attain the auspicious state of Mukti as well as of Turiya and Samadhi (as narrated in the foregoing verses) (27).

A person who can remain calm and steady by controlling his Vasanas (i.e. the inherent passions, yearnings, desires and wishes that are so characteristic of all living beings; worldly attachments and attractions) is the one who can keep his mind and heart steady and focused on his spiritual goal. Such a man is said to be steady and unwavering in his spiritual pursuit.

When an aspirant reaches this exalted state of existence when he is not disturbed by the constant interference of the various Vasanas, he can experience the bliss and peace that are only available when this state is reached. He is deemed to be in the state of Samadhi or a trance-like state marked with indifference to the gross existence consisting of the material world and the gross body, a state of complete peace and tranquility that bestows rest and bliss to the aspirant. Since true peace and bliss is available only when one gets rid of the Vasanas and obtains the state of Samadhi, it also called the 'Kaivalya state of existence' (because the word 'Kaivalya' literally means one of its only kind).

[This is very obvious—when a man is being subjected to constant nagging demands of the sense organs of the body as well as the heart and the mind, he can never ever hope to find peace. He would be constantly striving to fulfill their never-ending requests and expectations. It is only when he shuns them or shuts off the door to them that he can 'sleep or rest in peace'.

This phrase 'sleep and rest in peace' is a metaphor for his state of Turiya and Samadhi because he is unaware of anything pertaining to the external physical world made aware of by the medium of the sense organs of the gross body, as well as the subtle world of the sub-conscious mind that exists in his dreams. When this overwhelming calmness prevails, when there is nothing to disturb the Atma, the latter finds true rest and peace. Since true rest and peace and their accompanying sense of bliss and happiness is available only when this eclectic state is reached, it is defined as the 'Kaivalya' state—or the state that is unique and unmatched. This existential state bestows him with extreme bliss and peace; he feels full of beatitude and felicity; he is steady, unruffled and unmoving; he is unaffected by anything in this world; he is totally indifferent and neutral to everything, being merely a witness to all. He exists in his truthful state of enlightened 'self', and it is tantamount to his being in the Turiya or Samadhi state of enlightened existence.] (29).

This highest form of Samadhi is said to have its only origin in the enlightenment and true wisdom that the Chitta (the sub-conscious mind) has obtained. In other words, the true form of Samadhi is obtained when the mind is illuminated (taught; made aware of; wizened) about the 'truth', and thereby becomes enlightened.

Those who are well-versed in the eclectic philosophy of the Vedas regard this as the Turiya state of existence (which is the transcendental state). [Hence, Samadhi and Turiya are equivalent to each other.] (51).

The Sushupta state (or the 'deep sleep state) of consciousness is on the threshold of the Turiya state; it precedes the Turiya state and is very close to it.

When the Mana (mind) and Ahankar (ego, pride) dissolve (i.e. when both the mind that harbours ego, and the ego that influences the working of the mind, are made ineffective, are neutralized) it is then that the aspirant is said to have reached the Sushupta state.

[The Sushupta state of existence is the deep sleep state that comes after the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness. In this state the mind and the sub-conscious are both defunct. The difference between the Sushupta and Turiya states is that the creature reverts to the Swapna state from the Sushupta state, but when he reaches the Turiya state this reversal does not happen. That is why the Turiya state is likened to Samadhi while the Sushupta state isn't. The concept of various states of existence has been explained in detail in an appendix at the end of this volume.] (52)."

"Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16 = Oh Nidagh! The subtle Sushupta state of the mind and sub-conscious (when they are inactive and defunct for all practical purposes even though the creature might be physically awake as described in verse no. 12 above) is achieved and made steady by constant practice.

When the Sushupta state is ripe and perpetual, it is known as the 'Turiya' state. This is what those who are experts in the essence of metaphysics assert (13).

All the worldly problems of the spiritual aspirant are eliminated in the Turiya state, and he obtains a perpetual state of extreme Anand (blissfulness, beatitude and felicity marked by ecstasy and contentedness) in this state (14).

This extreme sense of Anand that is experienced in the Turiya state is also called 'A-Anand'—the state of existence when the feeling of Anand is so permanent and all-pervading that the aspirant is not even aware of its presence, he is so habituated to it that he does not find anything special about it. Hence, he becomes neutral to the enjoyment of Anand as well.

[It is like the case of a man who is habituated to the worldly comforts of a wealthy life. A man who is poor greedily yearns for such a life, and if he is fortunate enough to access it he would wallow in it for some time till he becomes bored with it. The rich man is habituated with a pampered life of material comfort so much so that he pays no attention to it for it is taken for granted by him. Similarly, a spiritual aspirant who has reached the Turiya state of existence is becomes so steady in it that the fact he is in blissful and contented state has no special significance for him; it is routine thing henceforth.]

This sort of Anand, i.e. the so-called 'A-Anand', is eternal and immense in its stretch and dimension. It is also called 'Maha-Anand' or 'the great bliss, the great beatitude and the great felicity'.

The state of 'Maha-Anand' is so steady, so robust, so permanent and so perpetual that not even 'Kaal' (all dimensions of time and circumstance) can disturb it; it is beyond the reach and purview of Kaal.

[That is, not even the greatest of adversities can disturb the level of bliss, happiness and contentedness that a man who has reached the Turiya state enjoys. No temptations of the world are strong enough or charming enough to allure him away from the state of blissfulness and contentedness in which he lives during the Turiya state.]

Such an ascetic or Yogi who has obtained the Turiya state of consciousness is deemed to have attained Mukti (i.e. has attained liberation and deliverance) (15).

All the fetters and bondages that are an integral part of the creature's life in this world, and which have shackled him to the world not only in this present life but even had done so in his past lives, are broken and done away with when he has reached the Turiya state.

All his negative traits such as having 'Abhimaan' (i.e. having a sense of ego and false pride with their accompanying arrogance and haughtiness) are dispelled.

[A man feels proud on having successfully done anything only when he thinks that he is the one who has done something, when he feels that he had skillfully handled the situation leading to achievement of success. But when he has developed the eclectic view of not getting involved in the deeds done by the body, when he maintains stoic neutrality and detachment towards the deeds then he cannot claim any honours for success. Hence, there would be no reason for his developing any sort of 'Abhimaan' in whatever success that has been achieved by his body in this life. He would be doing deeds but remains totally immune to any sense of pride and ego related to them. This is exactly what is expected of an enlightened man who has reached the Turiya state of existence.]

Just like a piece of salt put in water dissolves in it without leaving a trace, becoming one with the water itself, a spiritual aspirant who has obtained the highest state of realisation and enlightenment dissolves his 'self' and merges it with the supreme 'Self' to become one

with it and indistinguishable from it. Such an aspirant is honoured as being a 'Mahatma'—a great Atma, a great soul (16)."

"Canto 3, verse nos. 17-18 = A self-realised and enlightened man lives with a calm, peaceful and steady mind and sub-conscious that is the natural state of consciousness during the Sushupta state. In this state, the only entity that exists is the consciousness with its grand sublime virtues and eclectic divine qualities, while the world, both the gross and the subtle, are made redundant. Thus, the man can live peacefully and blissfully, without any kind of restlessness and agitations, or any kind of bewilderments, confusions or doubts when he has reached the Sushupta state of existence.

[The Sushupta state is the third state of existence of consciousness when the mind as well as the sub-conscious has been rendered inactive, or they have shut down. This is a higher state of sleep and it comes beyond the second state of Swapna or dreams when the sub-conscious mind is active even though the active aspect of the mind is shut down. Since the mind is the only instrument that acts as a link between the pure consciousness and the external world, whether at the gross level or at the subtle level, when the mind is kept aside the consciousness is left alone, and it is then that its natural and inborn characteristics and virtues come to the fore. These are marked by calmness of demeanours and a state of blissfulness and peace.]

This Sushupta state is the preparatory state for the higher state of Turiya. In other words, what is experienced during the Sushupta state is made permanent and robust in the Turiya state (refer verse no. 18 below). The Turiya state is compared to a large mountain which is absolutely unmoving and unchanging over time no matter what happens in the world around it.

[No seasons affect it; rain, sunshine and tempest are equal for it. It may be covered by snow or might harbour a vibrant wildlife and a dense forest, but none of them ever bothers the mountain. Similarly, nothing of the world ever affects the inner-self of a spiritually enlightened aspirant who has attained the Turiya state of existence.] (17).

By first attaining the Sushupta state he progresses and graduates to the higher state of Turiya. Such an attained soul achieves an eclectic state of existence where everything is alike for it, where it does not distinguish between a situation that gives happiness and bliss and another that does not. For an enlightened man, there is no such thing as something being 'true' and the other being 'un-true', for he has developed complete neutrality towards everything else except the Consciousness that he knows is an irrefutable and unequivocal Truth. Once the 'Absolute Truth' is known, other non-absolute truths do not bother him at all.

[In other words, he lives in that higher state of consciousness where mundane matters do not cast their dark shadow of unhappiness and misery. He is so high up in the hierarchy of existence that lowly things do not matter for him or bother him much like the sun is unbothered by small patches of the earth that are covered by clouds or some deep cave where no sunshine ever reaches. The earth rotates on its axis as it goes around the sun so that every day a new fraction of the earth's surface would face the sun, but the sun is unconcerned.] (18)."

These four states of consciousness have been described in *Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 20-21 as follows—

"Verse no. 20 = Just like a spider weaves a web and then gobbles up its own creation, the living being too oscillates between the two states of consciousness called Jagrat or the waking state, and the Swapna or dreaming state (20).

[Note—The consciousness exists in this world at two planes or levels—one is called the gross level and the other is called the subtle level. These two planes of its existence are called the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness, and the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness respectively.

During the waking state, the Atma or the 'self' lives in the gross world through the medium of the gross organs of the body consisting of the organs of perception (eye that sees, ears that hear, tongue that tastes, nose that smells and skin that feels) and the organs of action (hands that receive and does deeds, legs that move and go to places, mouth that eats and speaks, genitals that reproduce and excretory organs that eliminate). The Atma is awake from the perspective of the world because it is interactive with it, perceives its stimuli and responds to them.

The second stage is when the gross body has become defunct and non-active, and in this case the Atma lives in the world governed only by the mind-intellect complex, the heart, the numerous Naadis or ducts such as the nerves and veins etc. which are collectively called the subtle body. Here the sub-conscious mind comes into play, and it conjures up a world of its own which is a subtle world of dreams. It is called a 'dream' because it has no physical presence and no gross organs are involved. The upside of this dream world is that it is not subjected to the limitations imposed by the gross organs of the body and can be many times more fascinating, diverse and grand than the physical world where the gross organs of the body come into play. This is because the mind's reach has no end and the dreams are the creations of the sub-conscious mind.

In both the cases the mind is active, but on a different plane. In the case of the waking state it is limited by the ability and reach of the physical organs, while in the dreaming state it is left to its own accord and abilities. So the creature oscillates between these two worlds when the Atma relies upon the mind to perceive the world. He either lives in the physical gross world in his waking state or the subtle world in his dreaming state. When in the waking state, he forgets about the world of dreams, and when in the dreaming state he forgets about the world of waking state. They cannot exist simultaneously. When dreaming, he withdraws the tentacle-like organs of perception and action from the world, and when awake these organs are spread out.

From the above discussion it naturally follows that if the mind is taken out of the picture, the Atma would transit to a next higher plane of existence which transcends these two states. Hence, the third state is the deep sleep state or the Sushupta state of consciousness where the mind is completely defunct and inactive. Since the mind is absent, the world also ceases to remain in any of the two forms discussed herein above. In this third state the Atma or the consciousness exists in its pristine form in the blissful state surrounded by the Bliss Sheath. Usually for an ordinary creature, this third state is transient and soon he reverts back to the earlier two stages.

But if this third stage becomes perpetual, he is said to live in the fourth state called Turiya or the transcendental state of blissfulness. This is a very typical stage of existence inasmuch as that when a creature is able to reach it, he appears to be active in this world, he goes about his normal duties and appears to be awake as during a normal Jagrat state, but internally he is asleep to the external world in the sense that his mind does not register any incoming stimuli from the external world. Such a person would do deeds but not remember what he is doing or has done a moment ago. He would not recollect anything. Such a man is deemed to be free from deeds and their consequences though outwardly his body is involved in doing deeds. Such a man is said to be in a perpetual state of Samadhi.]

"Verse no. 21 = The Atma known by the name of Vaishwanar during the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness symbolically resides in the eye[1].

The Atma known by the name of Taijas during the Swapna or dreaming state of consciousness symbolically resides in the throat[2].

The Atma known by the name of Pragya (i.e. the consciousness in its primary enlightened form having awareness and knowledge, erudition and wisdom) during the Sushupta or deep sleep state of consciousness symbolically resides in the heart[3]. Finally, the Atma is known by the name of Turiya when it transcends these three states of existence and lives in the divine and eclectic spot in the body called the Brahm-Randhra[4]. (21).

[Note—[1]The word Vaishwanar has many connotations as follows—(i) It is the fire used in sacrificial rituals. (ii) The microcosmic pure consciousness that resides inside the body of the creature, providing it with life, vitality and energy which helps it to digest food. (iii) Vedanta says that it is the pure consciousness that is a fraction of the Supreme Consciousness, and it resides in the body of the creature even as the Supreme Consciousness resides in the macrocosmic vast body of Nature or creation. It is representative of the supreme, transcendental entity that is the Lord and the primary cause and the governing authority of the whole creation. (iv) Since the creatures have myriad forms, it has as many forms as the creatures themselves, incorporating all of them in it. Hence, it is also called 'Viraat Purush' (which means the vast, colossus, all incorporating, all-pervading, almighty form of the microcosmic Atma of the creature as well as the macrocosmic Atma of the creation; it is measureless, infinite and eternal). This is the subtle form of 'Vaishwanar'. (v) The gross manifestations of this 'Vaishwanar' is the 'Annamaya Kosh' or the food sheath which is one of the five sheaths enclosing the Atma of the creature. This is because, as the Vaishwanar Agni (fire), it helps in digestion of food. (vi) Its state of existence is defined as the 'waking state of consciousness'. (vii) The word also means—relating to or belonging to all men, omnipresent, known and worshipped everywhere, universal, general, common, complete, immutable, full in number, a collective noun for all the Gods, one who is all commanding and almighty.

The word Vaishwanar refers to the universal fire element because the fire provides the light with which the creature sees the world. The fire removes darkness and illuminates the realm with its light. In this context, the Sun is the eye of Brahm in the sky because

it is through this Sun and its fire that the world is lighted and energized. The faculty of sight in the eye of the creature is thus a symbolic presence of this Vaishwanar at the macro level of creation.

The Atma is called a Vaishwanar because the man becomes aware of the world when he sees it with his own eyes. This is why it is called the 'waking' state of consciousness. The presence of the consciousness known as the Vaishwanar in the eye is a metaphor for this waking state because when a man 'sees' anything only when he is awake and not while he sleeps.

[2]This is because the man remains mentally active while dreaming even though his physical body is inactive, and this is symbolised by saying that his consciousness resides in his throat. It has been observed that a dreaming man is sometimes so engrossed and involved in the world of his dreams, experiencing emotions and sentiments so intensely that often he might whisper or make guttural sounds during sleep. There are instances when a man even talks aloud in his dream. Snoring is another manifestation of the presence of consciousness in the throat. When a man wakes up from his dreams, the only way he can describe what he has 'seen and witnessed' during his dream is by the use of words, and this implies the use of voice which has its seat in the throat.

[3]This is because the man's Atma has its primary divine abode in his heart. Even when the man does not dream, i.e. even when his sub-conscious mind ceases to function, his heart continues to beat uniformly and incessantly. Had it not been so, the person would have died. The proof that the Atma—which is the pure consciousness symbolising the vital spark of life present inside the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature and the only factor that can be definitively called 'the life-giving entity' in the body—residing in the heart as an embodiment of such glorious virtues as enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom, awareness, erudition and such other eclectic virtues that are the hallmarks of consciousness lies in the fact that when this man wakes up, he immediately connects with the external world even in a fraction of a second, recollecting instantly what he had been doing, what he had learnt before sleeping, and so on and so forth. If the Atma had lacked the attribute of 'Pragya' as described here, the person would not have been able to recollect what his name was, what he had been doing before going to sleep, what he had learnt earlier, etc. So it is said that the Atma exhibits all the eclectic and sublime virtues which come under the broad definition of Pragya.

[4]The Brahm-Randhra is the hair-like slit on the top of the head from where the supreme Brahm had entered the body of the man at the time of creation, and it is the spot form which the Pran or vital winds of an ascetic (a Yogi) escapes from his body at the time of his death, while he is meditating at that time, to merge with the elements in Nature and become one with them. During the life time of the ascetic, he concentrates his life-forces by the virtue of various Yoga techniques at this spot, which results in his attaining extreme sense of blissfulness and peace. A truly realised and seasoned ascetic can continue to live in this perpetual state of beatitude and felicity even while he manages to do all his routine deeds in this world.

Among the other Upanishads, it appears in Kaivalyo-panishad in verse no. 12-14. Elsewhere, this concept has been elaborately described in Brihad Aranyak Upanishad,

1/1/17-20, 2/1/16-20, and 4/3/9-38.]"

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 8, verse nos. 9-16, and 19-20 explains the four states of existence elaborately. Let us now see what it has to say—

"Verse no. 9-11 = [Verse nos. 9-19 describe the four Paads or steps symbolising the different forms in which the supreme Brahm exists.]

Now the different Paads of the supreme Brahm are being enumerated in a step-by-step manner. Since the Atma is a personification of this Brahm, since it is this Atma residing inside the body of the creature that actually perceives this world and enjoys it in its gross, subtle and subtlest forms, and since inspite of all this the Atma retains its primary form as being eternally blissful and contented, it too has all the different Paads associated with Brahm.

It is said that the Atma has four Paads or steps or aspects or forms similar to that of Brahm.

The Jagrat or waking state of consciousness is the first Paad of the Atma at the macro level of creation, and of Brahm at the macro level of creation.

[Briefly, the Jagrat state of consciousness is that state in which the creature perceives the physical external world through its gross body and its sense organs. In this state, the stimuli from the external world are received by the organs of perception and sent to the brain or mind. The latter than does the actual interpretation job and gives the necessary instructions to the organs of action to act. For more serious matters it consults the intellect. During this waking state, the creature becomes aware of the existence of the physical world, comes to witness it first hand, and gains a hands-on experience of its varied facets. It does have to imagine the existence of this world because the latter is witnessed first hand directly. In the entire episode, the sub-conscious mind stores information gathered by the mind and intellect for future reference. Hence, during the Jagrat state, the mind and intellect as well as the gross body consisting of the various sense organs are directly involved. The word 'Jagrat' also has a metaphoric connotation in as much as it implies that whatever the creature comes to learn is when he is wide awake and can consciously pick and choose what to and what not to learn. It is called 'Viswa' or the world at large because he not only learns about his immediate surroundings but about the world as it exists even in far off places, in the past and the present. Based on this statistical knowledge the creature can even predict the future intelligently.]

In this form, the visible gross world is its body (because it physically lives in it and actually perceives it), who (Brahm) pervades or lives throughout the visible world (even as consciousness lives in all parts of the body of a creature while he is awake), whose all-knowing wisdom covers the entire gamut of the visible world (because when a wise and intelligent creature is awake he becomes aware of all the happenings around him), who is the protector of the entire visible world (because as soon as consciousness retracts itself from this world, the latter ceases to exist) [9-10],——

—who has nineteen metaphoric mouths (symbolised by the following—the 5 sense organs such as ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin + 5 organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth,

excretory and genitals + 5 Prans or vital airs or winds such as Pran or main breath, Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan + 4 Anthakarans or inner self such as Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious and Ahankar or ego and pride = 19), whose limbs are the eight Lokas (consisting of Bhu, Bhurva, Swaha, Maha, Janaha, Tapaha, Satyam and Patal =8), who is the undisputed supreme Lord ('Prabhu') of the entire world, who is revealed in the four states of existence known as Sthul or gross, Sukshma or subtle, Kaaran or causal, and Sakshi or the one who is a sole witness of everything—verily, the supreme transcendental and all-pervasive macrocosmic Brahm who has revealed himself as this vast and colossus creation is known as Vaishwanar Purush or the Viraat Purush. [The Vaishwanar is the all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of Brahm. It is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm and represents the sum total of all gross bodies in existence as well as the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness.] [11] (9-11).

"Verse no. 12 = Verily, the above described form of existence is the first Paad of the supreme transcendental Brahm.

[Now the second Paad is being narrated.]

The second state in which consciousness exists is known as Swpana or the dreaming state.

[The Swapna or dreaming state, as the name suggests, is when a creature imagines the presence of a world which has no physical existence. In this case, the physical gross body is asleep or inactive, as is the conscious aspect of the mind and intellect. Only the sub-conscious aspect of the mind is active, and the creature draws upon the data-bank of this sub-conscious mind to conjure up a fascinating world of virtuality. All knowledge that the consciousness gathered while in the Swapna state is not physical, and it exists only in the subtle level. This knowledge may be quite divergent from the knowledge of the Jagrat state. And this is the reason why the world of dreams is often very different from the world which exists in the waking state. Whereas the knowledge and the world during the Jagrat state is like the hard copy of anything, the world and knowledge of Swapna is like the soft copy. Whereas one can actually have the feel of the hard copy and its existence can be ascertained and protected, no one can feel the soft copy, and when the latter would vanish due to some software problem is most uncertain to say. But whereas the world during the Jagrat state has its own limits due to a variety of practical and physical factors, no such limitations are imposed in the subtle state and the consciousness can imagine things and create a world much more fascinating and colourful than actually possible in practice in the Jagrat state.]

The Atma (i.e. the creature's true self) that is conscious of existence of the world in its subtle form (as opposed to the gross and physical form) in the creature's dreaming state is the de-facto Lord of this state. [This is because it is the Atma that conjures up a world of dreams. If it so wants, it can exclude this state, and once the creature retires to rest and the body ceases to function, the consciousness can allow the mind to rest too. And when this happens the creature wouldn't dream. In other words, just like any kingdom is headed by a ruling monarch, the world of dreams is headed by this subtle aspect of the Atma.]

And since Atma and Brahm are synonymous with each other, it is said that this subtle state of existence of consciousness, which is equivalent to the dreaming state of existence, or the Swapna state, is the second Paad or aspect of the cosmic Brahm.

Hence, Brahm or the cosmic Consciousness that exists in the dreaming state of existence and makes the creature aware of the subtle world that exists only virtually in one's dreams is called 'Sukshma Pragya Brahm'—i.e. Brahm that is manifested and known in its subtle form (as opposed to its gross form known as the Vishwa that exists in the Jagrat or waking state).

This Brahm also has the eight limbs or aspects as described earlier for the Vishwa or Viraat Brahm. [Refer verse no. 11.]

Oh the one who has done great Tapa (i.e. has done great austerity and penance; a reference to sage Narad)! This Brahm or consciousness in the form of the Atma is all alone in the Swapna state of existence. [And this is why this consciousness is called 'Prabhu' or Lord of this subtle state of dreams. The same epithet Prabhu was used in verse no. 11 to describe Brahm as the only Lord in the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness.] (12).

"Verse no. 13 = This subtle aspect of Brahm or the 'Sukshma Brahm' (i.e. the consciousness that exists in the Swapna or dreaming state of existence) is the one who sustains and experiences the presence the presence of various Tattvas or elements as they exist in their subtle state or form.

If this subtle Brahm or subtle consciousness that exists in the Swapna state is taken as having an independent existence, then it can also be said to have the four distinct states of existences as the gross aspect of Brahm did. [This subtle form consciousness in the dreaming state is said to have an independent existence because a world of dreams is an independent world, complete in its self in all respects. While a creature dreams, he behaves just like he would do in the real world—he has relations, he does so many deeds, he cries and laughs, he goes here and there, he loves and hates, he eats and fasts, and so on. Except for the fact that the physical gross body with its natural limitations is not involved, there is not much of a difference between the actual world of the waking state and the world of dreams. These two worlds are like independent worlds having separate existence. For instance, whereas a man may be a pauper in the gross physical world of the Jagrat state, he might be a king in the Swapna world. Therefore, if the consciousness or Brahm or Atma can have four states of existence while in the Jagrat state, it can also have similar or equivalent number of forms in the Swapna state. These four states are symbolically—Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya. One might wonder, for instance, how a creature can be dreaming while already in the dreaming state. Well, since the world of dreams is an independent world of its own, a creature can be awake in it, doing so many things, or he might sleep and dream like he would do while actually sleeping in the physical world. It must be noted that we are dealing with the analysis of Brahm, an entity that is unknown, most mysterious, enigmatic and esoteric, and like in science or mathematics we have to presume certain things based on known data and experience in order to arrive at a definite conclusion about the unknown.]

The Atma or the individual's consciousness that exists in the Swapna state of existence is known as 'Taijas'. It is because it is magnificent, majestic, glorious and dynamic. [Why so? It is because whereas in the Jagrat state of existence the Atma was subject to the limitations of the gross body, no such boundaries exist in the Swapna state. The Atma in the Swapna or dreaming state is more dynamic and maverick and powerful, capable of achieving stupendous and astounding things that would be impossible for it to accomplish while in the Jagrat or waking state.]

The consciousness that exists in the individual level of the creature, i.e. in the macro level of creation, is called Taijas as mentioned above, while the same consciousness when it is considered at the macro level of existence is known as 'Hiranyagarbha'. [The 'Hiranyagarbha' is therefore the sum total of all subtle bodies in creation.]

The previous form of cosmic Consciousness which is known as the Viraat or Vaishwanar is the gross aspect of Brahm (refer verse nos. 10-11), while the form known as Hiranyagarbha (as described in verse nos. 12-13) is the subtle aspect of Brahm.

This subtle form of the cosmic Consciousness known as Hiranyagarbha is the second Paad of the supreme Brahm (13).

"Verse no. 14 = [This verse describes the third state of consciousness known as Sushupta.]

The living being in the Sushupta state of existence does not see any dreams and neither does he has any sort of wishes for enjoyment of any sense organs or objects. It is a state of dissolution when nothing exists and matters.

[Briefly, the Sushupta state is the deep sleep state of consciousness when even the sub-conscious mind goes into hibernation. With the mind and body both becoming defunct, the creature is neither awake nor dreaming. It exists in a state of neutrality or dissolution. Thus it experiences nothing of the physical world of the Jagrat state or that of the Swapna state.]

The cosmic Consciousness that exists in this state of complete dissolution known as Sushupta, is known as the Kaaran or the causal body. It is the sum total of all the causal bodies of creation. [As the word implies, this state of consciousness is the 'causative factor'—or Kaaran—that gives rise to all other aspects or forms of existence of consciousness. It is from this neutral state that the other forms of conscious existence emerge. Hence, it is the 'cause' of coming into being the other states of consciousness such as the Swapna and the Jagrat. Therefore, this neutral and virtually dissolved state of consciousness is called the 'Kaaran' or the 'causative' aspect of the existence.] (14).

"Verse no. 15 = In this primary form of Kaaran or causal body, the Consciousness is in a single form (i.e. it is still not revealed in its many connotations or varied aspects). It is unique and magnificent in its self. It is endowed with profound Gyan (knowledge). [This is because any entity that has knowledge can ever hope to be the cause of initiating any sort of action that results in the development of something fresh. An entity that has no knowledge would not be able to achieve anything in any field. Knowledge is the driving force of any kind of activity and development. Since this Kaaran or causal body of the Consciousness is able to

give rise to the other states of existence, since it can conjure up a fascinating world in its dreams, and then actually perceive this world in physical tangible form in the waking state, it is obvious that it has knowledge! It is not ignorant and stupid.]

It exists in a happy and eternally blissful state of existence. [This is because it has yet no worries of any kind, as the world—both the physical world of the Jagrat or waking state as well as the subtle world of the Swapna or dreaming state—is shut off. Since there are yet no perceptions, and since the mind that is the cause of all pain and miseries is still in a dissolved state, the consciousness exists in the blissful state of existence as long as it stays in the Kaaran body.]

This consciousness is the one that lives in the inner self or the subtle heart of all living beings as their Atma, their true and pure self (15).

"Verse no. 16 = At the macrocosmic level of creation, this state of consciousness is equivalent to the Ishwar or the supreme Lord of creation. This Ishwar is therefore in an eternally blissful state.

The light of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment is the metaphoric mouth of this Ishwar. He is omnipresent and all-pervading. He is eternal, imperishable, steady, constant and irrefutable as well as the absolute Truth of creation.

This supreme Ishwar or Lord is the one who has revealed himself in all the four forms in which consciousness exists in this creation (such as the Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya states)—and it is he who is known as 'Pragya' as well. [The Ishwar represents the sum total of all the causal bodies of creation at the cosmic level, while its counterpart at the level of the individual creature is known as Pragya. The word 'Pragya' literally implies one that knows, one that has knowledge, is wise, erudite and enlightened. All these are the characteristics of the Atma which is the pure consciousness in its primary form, and nothing else.]

Hence, Ishwar or Pragya stands for the third Paad of Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness) (16).

"Verse no. 19 = Besides the three Paads of Brahm (as narrated in verse nos. 9-16) there is one more Paad which is above or superior to all of them. It is called the transcendental state of consciousness, or Turiya state of existence.

All the states in which the cosmic Consciousness exists are deemed to be incorporated in this Turiya state. The consciousness in the Turiya state is in a non-dual form, and it is from this single entity that all the other three states of existence emerge. [It is like the case of a post-graduate student who has completed his MA degree. It is assumed and taken for granted that he must have passed his graduate BA degree and earlier his school leaving exam if he has the MA degree. When he has completed his MA degree, it is assumed that he has the knowledge that is taught at the level of the school as well as at the graduate level. Similarly, the higher and superior transcendental state of consciousness known as Turiya is deemed to have been arrived at by a creature after having crossed the earlier three stages of Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta.] (19).

"Verse no. 20 = The three states of existence of the consciousness that are deemed to be incorporated in the Turiya state are Ot, Anugyat and Anugya. [Refer verse no. 3 of the present Canto 8 for elaboration.] They help one to analyse and understand the existence of the different aspects of the world and creation. But ultimately all come to a single point—and it is the non-dual nature of the consciousness as it exists in the eternally blissful Turiya state.

Just like the two states of existence (i.e. the Swapna or dreaming state as well as the Jagrat or waking state) are regarded as the delusory effect caused by Maya upon the pure consciousness that exists in the Sushupta state, it follows, by extension, that when the consciousness rises higher to the Turiya state then all the three states below it (i.e. the Sushupta, Swapna and Jagrat) are also the effect of Maya. [The Atma or pure consciousness of the creature in the Sushupta state is completely neutral. But under delusions it begins to think that it lives in a world of dreams or Swapna, and in the physical world of Jagrat. It oscillates between these three states because it is not certain which is true and which is false—refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 16-18, 34-35; and in Brahm Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 20-21. The Brahm/ Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 11 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes the three states of existence of the consciousness as the Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupta. It goes on to affirm that 'any person who is able to transcend these three states of existences, or who has reached the fourth state called the Turiya state of permanent beatitude and felicity, is the one who does not have another birth'. 'Not having any more birth' is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature or his 'true self', has attained eternity in the form of realisation that it is not an ordinary entity but cosmic Consciousness that exists in the Turiya state. Refer also to our present Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4.]

Hence, a wise spiritual aspirant must understand and be convinced that there is only one non-dual supreme consciousness known as Brahm. It is most advisable for him to know this fact and overcome all delusions about this world and its existence (20)."

The *Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, paragraph nos. 6, describes the four states of existence of consciousness and their sub-divisions. It says that the main four states of existence of consciousness, viz. Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya, are further divided into four sub-classes each, thereby bringing the total number of states to sixteen. [4 x 4 = 16.]

These sixteen states of consciousness correspond to the sixteen aspects or Paads of Brahm, the supreme, transcendental and divine Being. Since all living beings and everything rest in creation are an image of this universal and all-pervading Brahm, and since all living beings have the same cosmic Consciousness residing in them as their Atma, the pure conscious soul, it follows that the living world itself has sixteen sub-divisions from the perspective of metaphysics.

These divisions or classification of the state of existence of the universal Consciousness were explained to the creator Brahm by no less a divine One than Lord Adi-Narayan, the Supreme Being, himself. Now, let us quote this Upanishad and see what it has to say—"

[Brahma (the creator) asked once again—] 'Oh Lord, what is form of 'Pranav Brahm' (the cosmic Consciousness)?'

[Lord Adi-Narayan replied—] 'Pranav Brahm has sixteen Matras or aspects. [These 'Matras' of Brahm are also known as 'Kalaas' of Brahm.]

There are four states of existence of consciousness, and each of them has four aspects, bringing the total to sixteen.

There are said to be four primary states of existence of consciousness—viz. Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, Sushupta or deep sleep state, and Turiya or post Sushupta state of existence of consciousness[1]. Each of these primary states is further divided into four more subtle sub-classes of existence bearing the same names as the four primary states.

Hence, the first primary state of existence known as 'Jagrat' or waking state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

Similarly, the second primary state of existence known as 'Swapna' or dreaming state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

Likewise, the third primary state of existence known as 'Sushupta' or deep sleep state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

And finally, the fourth primary state of existence known as 'Turiya' or trans-Sushupta state of consciousness has four subtle secondary states as sub-divisions or sub-classes known as Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya.

Thus, the first primary state of consciousness known as 'Jagrat', when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the vast external 'Vishwa' or the gross world of material sense objects. This state in which the consciousness becomes aware of the external world includes four sub-levels, and each exists as a world in its own right. Hence, during the 'Jagrat' state we have the following four classes of Vishwa (external visible, gross world) known as 'Vishwa-Vishwa', 'Vishwa-Taijas', 'Vishwa-Pragya', and 'Vishwa-Turiya'.

The same principle is applied to the other three states.

Therefore, the second primary state of consciousness known as 'Swapna', when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the subtle world known as 'Taijas' (literally meaning an entity that is glorious, effulgent, radiant and splendorous; here referring to the world of dreams which is more splendorous, charming, magnificent and fascinating than the real gross world of physical gross existence). This state in which the consciousness becomes aware of the subtle world that is imaginary but appears to be true as it is created by the glorious creative abilities of the mind and the sub-conscious includes four sub-levels, and each exists in its own right. Hence, during the 'Swapna' state we have the following four classes of existence of Taijas world—'Taijas-Vishwa', 'Taijas-Taijas', 'Taijas-Pragya', and 'Taijas-Turiya'.

Similarly, the third primary state of consciousness known as 'Sushupta', when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the subtler world known as 'Pragya' (literally meaning an entity that is inherently wise, all-knowing, omniscient, enlightened and erudite). In this state the consciousness is free to see its own self because it is freed from the distractions caused to it by constant inputs from the gross organs of the body in relation to the external world and from the mind and its sub-conscious engaged in imagining a fascinating world of dreams. Hence, the consciousness is able to turn peacefully inwards and see the world of its own, and it is therefore called 'Pragya' as it is the world of enlightenment, wisdom, knowledge and erudition as opposed to the gross world known as Vishwa of the Jagrat state, and the subtle world known as Taijas of the Swapna state. Now, as in the previous cases, this Pragya also has four categories as follows—'Pragya-Vishwa', 'Pragya-Taijas', 'Pragya-Pragya', and 'Pragya-Turiya'.

Finally, the fourth primary state of consciousness known as 'Turiya', when considered on a macro plane or level of existence, produces the subtlest form in which the consciousness exists, the world known as the transcendental world or Turiya world. It is so-called because it crosses the outer limit of Sushupta in the sense that having reached this state, the consciousness does not have to revert back to the earlier three states of Sushupta, Swapna and Jagrat. It's virtually a permanent state of bliss and ecstasy when no awareness of any thing in its gross form exists, and the bliss and ecstasy are irreversible. Like the earlier three cases, this state is also sub-divided into four categories as follows—'Turiya-Vishwa', 'Turiya-Taijas', 'Turiya-Pragya', and 'Turiya-Turiya'.

Since consciousness and all forms of existence are nothing but Brahm, the super-consciousness, in all these forms, it follows that Brahm has sixteen Matras (or forms or aspects)."

This concept can be understood by a simple illustration. Suppose there are four types of bottles marked A, B, C and D. Each type has four bottles, hence we have four bottles of type A, four of B, four of C, and four of D, bringing the total number of bottles to sixteen. Now we are provided with four coloured liquids marked L1, L2, L3 and L4, and are asked to fill the four bottles of each category with each of these four liquids. When the filling is completed and the bottles are lined up and labeled, we will have a total of sixteen filled bottles, grouped in four categories of four bottles in each category as follows—

The 1st bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L1', the 2nd bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L2', the 3rd bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L3', and the 4th bottle of type 'A' having liquid 'L4'.

Similarly, we fill the other group of bottles as follows—the 1st bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L1', the 2nd bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L2', the 3rd bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L3', and the 4th bottle of type 'B' having liquid 'L4'.

Next, the bottles of group C are considered. The 1st bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L1', the 2nd bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L2', the 3rd bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L3', and the 4th bottle of type 'C' having liquid 'L4'.

Finally we have the 1st bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L1', the 2nd bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L2', the 3rd bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L3', and the 4th bottle of type 'D' having liquid 'L4'.

Thus, we have a total of 16 bottles filed with these liquids.

In this example, suppose the four types of bottles stand for the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. bottle of type 'A' represents Jagrat, bottle of type 'B' represents Swapna, bottle of type 'C' represents Sushupta, and bottle of type 'D' represents Turiya.

Similarly, suppose the four coloured liquids stand for the name assigned to this consciousness in each of these states—viz. liquid of type L1 represents Vishwa, liquid of type L2 represents Taijas, liquid of type L3 represents Pragya, and liquid of type L4 represents Turiya.

Therefore, we will have the following sequence—(i) Category A = 'Jagrat-Vishwa'; 'Jagrat-Tijas'; 'Jagrat-Pragya'; 'Jagrat-Turiya'; (ii) Category B = 'Swapna-Vishwa'; 'Swapna-Tijas'; 'Swapna-Pragya'; 'Swapna-Turiya'; (iii) Category C = 'Sushupta-Vishwa'; 'Sushupta-Tijas'; 'Sushupta-Pragya'; 'Sushupta-Turiya'; and finally (iv) Category D = 'Turiya-Vishwa'; 'Turiya-Tijas'; 'Turiya-Pragya'; 'Turiya-Turiya' = 16 states or aspects of the same consciousness.

An important point to note is that the existence of four sub-divisions in any one state of existence is a system adopted of grading the same consciousness into different subtle levels within the same state. It is like the system of grading students in school or college—those within the general grade 'A' are sub-divided into two or more categories such as A++, A+, A and A—.

The *Mandukya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 7 describes the fourth state of Turiya as follows—"That enigmatic, most esoteric and mystical entity which has paradoxical qualities such as it being neither enlightened or aware of anything nor being ignorant or not enlightened about it, an entity that is both enlightened and not enlightened, and hence deemed to be absolutely neutral so much so that it has no concern for or awareness of what is inside or what is outside, an entity that is neither understood or discerned by the organs of perceptions nor approachable or accessible by the organs of action, an entity that does nothing (as it does not need to do anything), an entity that has no parallel and comparisons or symbols, an entity that is beyond the reach of thoughts and speech (i.e. that cannot be thought of, cannot be even imagined, and cannot be spoken about or explained), an entity that is only accessible or witnessed by personal experience, an entity that is the point where everything in existence would ultimately collapse and conclude, an entity that is an embodiment of such divine virtues as being peaceful and tranquil, being auspicious and holy, and being non-dual and unmatched—verily, this entity is known as Brahm, the supreme transcendental Divine Being. And the state of its existence as described herein above, the state in which it exhibits these grand qualities is called the fourth aspect or Paad of Brahm.

This fourth state of existence of the cosmic Consciousness is called 'Turiya'—literally meaning the state that transcends the usual three levels in which an ordinary creature lives in this world. Indeed, this is the truthful form of the Atma that is worth knowing (as it represents

the real and truthful nature of the soul of the creature). [In other words, the Atma exhibits these characteristics if it is left alone. Since the Atma is the microcosmic form of Brahm, it follows that these eclectic qualities are also the qualities of Brahm.]"

According to *Brahmo-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, these four states of existence represent Brahm in his different divine manifestations. It says—"Brahm as the Atma has also been envisioned to exist in the four states in which consciousness lives—viz. the Jagrat state called the 'waking state of consciousness', the Swapna state called the 'dreaming state of consciousness', the Shushupta state called the 'deep sleep state of consciousness', and the Turiya state called the 'blissful state of consciousness'.

Each of these of four states of existence of the creature (i.e. the consciousness residing in the creature as it's pure and true 'self' known as its Atma) are symbolic revelations of one of the four divine aspects of Brahm. Brahm literally 'shines and makes its presence felt by its glorious illumination' in each of these four states. That is, in the Jagrat state, Brahm shines and reveals itself as Brahma the creator, in the Swapna state it is represented by Vishnu the sustainer and protector, in the Shushupta state by Shiva the concluder, also known as Rudra, and in the Turiya state by the Akchar which is imperishable and eternal (i.e. 'Akchar Brahm'—Brahm that does not decay and never perishes)."

(e) Finally comes the 5th state of existence of the Atma, and is called the *Turiyateet* state. This fifth state of Turiyateet or Turiyatit, literally the state that transcends the fourth state called Turiya, is one step further ahead in one's spiritual endeavour and the last stage in spiritual upliftment when the person crosses the threshold of awareness of this world and ceases to participate even in his normal functions in this world. He remains, for all practical purposes, like a log of wood, totally uninterested in, detached from, dispassionate towards, and completely oblivious of the world around him. Turiyateet is also a state of Samadhi like the Turiya state, but it is higher and more eclectic stage as compared to the latter. The last stage, called 'Turiyateet', goes beyond the fourth stage when a man wakes up into this world but remains 'virtually blind or sleeping' as far as his mind is concerned in relation to the gross world. Therefore, he remains awake but does not see; he does not smell, taste, feel and speak. Since all external stimuli fail to arouse his brain, he remains like 'a man sleep-walking'. In the absence of sensory perceptions, he does not feel either pain or sorrows, or happiness and joys. He remains totally oblivious to them. He lives in a state of complete blissfulness. This is the fifth state of existence of the Atma in its 'super-conscious' state.

The word 'Turiya' refers to the fourth state of existence of the pure consciousness, while the word 'Atit' or 'Ateet' means 'free from, beyond'. Therefore, the composite word 'Turiyateet' would refer to that state of existence of the Atma or pure consciousness that has gone beyond all the four states of existences of the Atma, and hence would be the fifth state of its existence. It is the state which goes beyond the perception of ordinary bliss and happiness; it is an eclectic state of perpetual and eternal spiritual beatitude and felicity from where there is no return. It is tantamount to final and ultimate liberation and deliverance of the soul of the creature. A Turiyateet lives in a perpetual state of Samadhi, which is a trance-like state of total

indifference to everything; it is a state of total neutrality.

During this state the man remains in a state resembling a man sleep walking; he is not aware of what is good or what is bad for him; he would as cheerfully do one set of things as the other set. For him, everything is the same. In the absence of sensory perceptions, he neither feels pains nor enjoys anything. He remains a mute expectator of all that is happening around him.

From the practical standpoint, there is little difference between the fourth and fifth states of existence. Perhaps the time factor differentiates them, for in the case of the Turiya state there is a chance of the ascetic coming back to the earlier three stages of conscious existence, but in the case of the Turiyateet state such chances of reversal is not at all possible. Turiya-teet = Yoga Upanishads explain its importance while describing how the Prans are mixed, the Kundalini activated, and the released energy made to enter the Sushumna Naadi and go upwards to reach the forehead and finally the top of the head. From here, the Pran either travels back the same route as indicated in this verse, or goes out of the body by escaping through the Brahm-Randhra.

While the Pran of the ascetic is in the region of the forehead as well as tip of the cranium he experiences extreme bliss and ecstasy. This is equivalent to the Sushupta state of existence. When the Pran travels back, the ascetic virtually comes back to the dreaming state and finally to the waking state of existence. Should the Pran remain swirling in the area of the head in the region of the forehead on a perpetual basis, the ascetic is said to be in a Turiya state of existence which is the transcendental state in the sense that the ascetic has 'transcended' the normal states of existence in which an ordinary creature lives.

When the Pran finally prepares to reach higher and swirl around the Brahm-Randhra preparing to make its final exit from the body, the ascetic is said to be in a Truiya-teet state which is nothing but the higher state of Turiya. When the Pran finally leaves the body by escaping out from the slit of the Brahm-Randhra, the ascetic gets Mukti or liberation and deliverance. This Mukti is called 'Kaivalaya' or the only one of its kind because once the Pran leaves the body it would not re-enter it. Hence, the ascetic's Mukti is once and for all; there is no reversal.

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 4 describes the five states of existence, viz. the Jagrat, the Swapna, the Sushupta, the Turiya and the Turiyatit along with narrating why the same consciousness is given two names of Parmatma and Atma, and what is the difference or similarity between them. Now let us see what it has to say—

"The four states in which a Jiva (living being) exists are the following—Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta and Turiya. The fifth state called the Turyiatit state is beyond these four.

In other words, the same Atma appears to exist in four different forms depending upon these four states of a creature's conscious existence. Hence, the Atma that lives in the Jagrat state is called 'Vishwa', in the Swapna state it is called 'Taijas', in the Sushupta state it is called 'Pragya', and in the Truiya state it is called 'Tathastha' (literally meaning non-involved, indifferent

and completely neutral). The Atma or consciousness that exists beyond these four states, the Atma which exists in the transcendental state called Turiyatit, is known as the 'Parmatma'—or the supreme Atma or the transcendental Consciousness. Since it is in 'transcendental' state of existence which goes beyond all the known states of worldly existence, it is natural that it rises above the mundane and remains free from all the faults and shortcomings that are associated with worldly existence—i.e. the Parmatma is immaculate and devoid of all taints and corruptions that might have shrouded the Atma when it assumes a gross body while it lives in this world. [This is the reason why the Parmatma is compared to the sky because the sky stays above the gross world known as the earth and does not have any of the limitations of the earth.]

Again, since the wise ascetic has already realised that his true 'self' is the Atma that lives in the Turiyatit state of existence (refer last paragraph of verse no. 3), it is obvious that he is like this Parmatma. So he exclaims upon this eclectic discovery—'I am Brahm (the Parmatma)!'

A person who lives perpetually in this Turiyatit state is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed by the other four states of existence. It may be argued that this Turiyatit state incorporates all the other four states of existence (as stated in the opening stanzas of verse no. 3), but in actual practice it is perpetually a completely neutral state, and anything that is profoundly and eternally neutral cannot be said to have bias towards any one or the other thing. Since there is no reversal of this state of Turiyatit, i.e. once a man reaches this transcendental state of existence he would not go back to the other four states of existence, he would not be aware of the gross world and his gross organs as done in the Jagrat state, he would not dream as in the Swapna state, he would not be in the temporary state of rest in the Sushupta state which is a transient state as the creature oscillates between the Sushupta and Swapna states while asleep, and he would not even have any junior level of spiritual evolvement as exemplified by the Turiya state which is higher than the Sushupta state but lower than the Turiyatit state. This is because he has reached the highest point in his spiritual journey and has reached its pinnacle or citadel. There is no existence beyond it; it is the supreme state in which the consciousness can ever expect to exist. Hence, it is honoured by the epithet 'Param'—one that is supreme and beyond which there is nothing.

Since the eternal and truthful Atma (here referring the cosmic form of the Atma known as Consciousness, rather than the Atma that lives inside the body of the individual creature as its Jiva-Atma) is the only conscious and living entity that exists in all of these states of existence, it is deemed to be the only one witness of their presence. [The gross body ceases to exist in the other states except the Jagrat state. The subtle body consisting of the mind ceases to exist in the Sushupta state. The causal body that harbours the individual's Atma ceases to exist when the creature dies and leaves the gross body. So, none of them are eternal. The Atma itself, though it is eternal and immaculate by nature, becomes mired in the delusions of the world, allows itself to be engrossed in doing so many deeds and suffering from their consequences, having various desires and assuming so many roles. Hence, it is also not apparently steady. In this scenario, the only entity that remains constant and unchanging is the Parmatma, the supreme

form of the individual Atma which is also known as Brahm. That is also why the latter is called the Absolute Truth—because the latter does not change.]

Since the Parmatma represents that superior aspect of the cosmic Consciousness that is absolutely neutral and detached from everything, including Maya (delusions), it is beyond the purview of the four normal states of conscious existence of a creature. The Atma living in the Turiyatit state is called a Parmatma. In this state, it cannot be called a 'Drasta' of anything, or the one who sees anything, observes anything, or is a witness to anything—because this is a completely neutral and detached state of existence in which the mind and all the other faculties are defunct, and in which nothing matters for the super-conscious Atma[1].

In such a case, should one regard the Jiva (the living being) as the Drasta? [That is, if the Parmatma is not the Drasta or the one who sees, observes and witnesses anything because of its sublime existence and neutral character, then can one treat the creature that has a gross existence as the seer, observer and witness?] No, this is also not the case because a creature has the notion of being a sufferer or enjoyer of things, of being a doer of deeds, and has ego and pride in him. How can he remain neutral and see, observe and witness things dispassionately? A creature is bound to be biased towards one thing and inclined against the other. This is not the proper way of seeing things—for the eye sees everything upon which its sight falls and it cannot decide what to eliminate and what to accept from the general view before it. So when the creature begins to distinguish between things, seeing one thing and neglecting the other, he is not being an honest Drasta. On the other hand, the Parmatma that lives in the transcendental state of Turiyatit is untouched by these faults that affect the Jiva.

Now suppose it is said that the Jiva's (living being's) true nature is not to remain involved in worldly affairs as it is the Atma which is pure consciousness that is equivalent to the cosmic Consciousness called the Parmatma, then this logic also does not hold its ground of validity. This is because as soon as the Atma assumes a gross body, it is immediately shrouded in ego and pride of having this body. It is almost impossible to find a living being or a Jiva who would not accept that he has a body. In fact, the very concept of Jiva rests on the premise that the Atma has a body. Therefore, if this notion of being a possessor of a body is done away with it is only then that the Jiva becomes equivalent to the Parmatma.

In other words, the difference between a Jiva and the Parmatma is just like the difference between the Ghatakash and the Mahakash. [The Ghatakash is the space present inside a hollow pitcher, and the Mahakash is the vast open sky outside the vessel. The Ghatakash is separated from the Mahakash by the physical body of the pitcher. Actually there is no distinction between the space inside and outside the pitcher, for if the vessel is broken the two spaces coalesce instantly and effortlessly.] The two names of the same thing are given only in an abstract manner for the purpose of study, for in actuality there is no difference. So therefore, a Jiva has a distinct existence only as long as it has the body—or is conscious that it has the body, and as soon as this awareness of the body is removed, the two—the Jiva and the Parmatma—become one.

[Another instance is cited now.] The same breath moves out and in the body as exhalation and inhalation. While doing so, it makes two distinct sounds—'Ha' and 'Sa' respectively. That is, while moving out the sound is equivalent to 'Ha', and when moving in the sound is 'Sa'. This forms the Mantra 'Hans', meaning a divine Swan. In other words, the Jiva's Pran or vital winds also display artificial distinction as being exhaled breath and inhaled breath though the air is the same uniform entity. A wise, self-realised and enlightened ascetic understands the esoteric message in this sound of Hans. He realises that the breath is telling him that he is like the divine bird Swan which is regarded as the purest and the wisest amongst the birds[2]. So, a wise ascetic always concentrates upon his pure and enlightened form known as the Atma that has no physical body like this wind or air element which too has no physical body.

With this sublime and eclectic spiritual view firmly established in his inner self, the enlightened ascetic discards all sense of ego and pride vis-à-vis the body. And when this happens, he becomes one with the Parmatma (as explained above) (4).

[Note—[1]The word 'Drasta' means one who sees, observes something. It is the mind that registers any sight that is seen, or any other perception for that matter, in order to enable the man to actually see or perceive the particular thing. For instance, a man might be gazing at something continuously but he might not be actually seeing it because his mind is lost in some other thoughts. In the present case when we refer to an ascetic in the Turiyatit state of existence we find that he is so much absorbed in meditation and reflection upon the truth of the Atma, his pure consciousness, and remains submerged in its thoughts and the bliss derived from it that he is totally oblivious about the surroundings. So, he lives in a perpetual trance, and though he might beg for food or take a bath in the river, actually, at the mental level, he is not doing anything at all. If one asks him anything about his actions, his answer naturally would be in the negative, and in this he would be speaking the actual truth.

This also explains the difference between the Turiya and the Turiyatit states. The living being who has vestiges of awareness left in him, even of the fact that he is an ascetic or a Sanyasi, or the fact that he is enlightened and wise, may have risen above the rest of the creatures and live in a Turiya state of trance-like existence that resembles Turyiatit state, but he has not achieved truthful success. That comes when he reaches the Turiyatit state of complete unawareness and neutrality—or a state of 'non-knowledge'. Obviously, a man who has no true knowledge of anything would not be able to see or hear or feel or taste or smell anything, simply because he does not know what these things mean or from where they originate or how to perceive them or distinguish between any two of them. This state is the truthful Turiyatit state. The Atma that lives in this eclectic transcendental state is the superior Atma called the 'Parmatma'. It is exemplarily neutral and dispassionate. It does not see and bear witness to any thing or event. It is not concerned with anything. Hence it is called a non-Drasta—one who does not see.

[2]The concept of Hans and the Mantra 'Hans' has been described in a number of Upanishads. The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a Swan and feels

exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird Swan or Hans is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it symbolising its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning, indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolising the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind —that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble. A wise man is expected to pick the truth from amongst the basket of assorted charms present in this creation, and leave aside the non-truths.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

References for Hans—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, Canto 6, verse no. 20, 35-36, 53-54; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 99. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hanso-panishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 31-35, 82-83, 93.]

The *Turiyateet Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes in detail the characteristic features of spiritual aspirants who have reached this most exalted state of existence of the Atma.

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 25 very succinctly describes what the higher state of transcendental existence known as Turiyateet is as follows—" When one develops this eclectic vision of life and creation (or existence), he is able to access Mukti (liberation and deliverance) while he is alive and has a gross body. That is, though he has a body but for all practical purposes he is deemed to be liberated from its shackling affects; he is deemed to be free from the limitations imposed on him by the grossness of the body.

[Such a realises that his 'true self' is the pure conscious Atma that is a sublime and subtle entity that is quite different from the gross body, as the latter is merely a habitat of the former. This self-realised and enlightened man can be doing all the deeds required of him in this world but still remain free from all bondages and encumbrances because he has developed the wisdom to understand that the deeds are being done by the body and not his 'true self' which is the Atma, the pure consciousness, and hence 'he' remains a mere spectator of what the body does. Besides this, he has also realised that the world is an imaginary thing of the mind, that it is entrapping and deluding by its inherent nature, and so anyone who is wise would have nothing to do with anything that is untrue and entrapping. Therefore it is well to avoid this trap. He has no expectations of any rewards or punishments from the deeds, he has no target for doing the deeds—for he simply does them because it is his duty and assigned to him by the Supreme Being who is the Lord of all creatures. With this eclectic and highly evolved spiritual way of thinking, he does not get involved in the deeds or in any of the demands for gratifications of the body and its sense organs. Thus no consequences accrue for him for doing deeds. For him, the body simply does not exist, and therefore the world also does not exist because the latter is directly related to the former.

This sublime thought process is a de-facto 'Mukti' for the aspirant as he has freed himself from the bondages of the body and the demands of its sense organs, as well as the world of sense objects and its attendant delusions and entangling web.]

This state of the mind and the sub-conscious is called 'Turiyateet Mukti' or the transcendental state of existence.

[This is because in the Turiyateet state of existence of the consciousness, which can be said to be the state of 'super-consciousness', the mind thinks of nothing; it is in a neutral state. In its wake, the 'self' too becomes neutral and established in the Turiyateet state because it was the mind that had been nagging the 'self' or the Atma of the creature with so many inputs and demands that the 'self' just could not find time to rest and find its peace. With the mind out of the scene, the 'self' or the Atma reverts to its primary state of existence which is inherently calm and neutral. The 'self' or the Atma therefore lives in the Turiyateet state when the mind enters this state of existence.] (25)."

The *brain has two components*—the intellect and the mind. The former is under the direct control of the Atma while the mind is subordinate to the intellect. The mind receives worldly stimuli through the sense organs, passes them to the intellect, obtains instructions from the intellect and passes them on to the organs of action —this state prevails when the man is 'awake'.

Now, when he is asleep, there are two stages—either he dreams or he does not. During the 'dreams state', the inherent Vasanas (the hidden passions, yearning and desires) come into play at the sub-conscious level and the mind lives up to all those Vasanas in an imaginary world. But when there is no dream, i.e. during the 'deep sleep state' of consciousness, the Atma is freed from interference and it reverts back to its original form of being 'nothingness, having no feelings and no emotions', just like the case wherein the mirror is removed from the front of a man and his image vanishes from it and the image reverts back into its primary source or object, which in this case is the man himself whose image was formed in the mirror. The Atma is an image of the supreme Brahma. When the mirror of the mind-intellect is removed, it (Atma) reverts back into its primary form which is Brahma whereas it related itself with the world when the mind-intellect was in active mode. So, the aspect of 'sleep' discussed in this section is the 'deep sleep state of consciousness', because it is in this state that the creature comes in direct contact of his true identity or true self, which is called Atma or pure consciousness. The creature is 'delinked or uncoupled' from the external world while sound asleep.

For the external world, a sleeping man is as good as being dead. For example, if a sleeping man is attacked by someone, he won't resist; he won't even know what has happened just in front of him while he was asleep. He is not medically or conventionally regarded as dead, but for all practical purposes 'he is as good as dead'. He neither feels pain nor happiness when in a deep sleep state of existence, which is beyond the dream state of sleep. The 'deep sleep state' is also called 'Swapraant' (स्वप्रान्त), literally meaning to be in one's own territory, to dwell in one's natural habitat. In this state, the gross body consisting of the sense organs and the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect complex remain shutoff, and the Atma residing in the causal body remains absolutely calm and peaceful and oblivious of the turmoil of the external mundane world. To be in this state perpetually is the natural habit and nature of the Atma, and therefore it finds this state its natural habitat. It is like being in a state of suspended animation or a self-imposed state of coma when the creature remains indifferent to what is happening around it and instead remains cocooned in its own shell. It is like a state of being virtually dead, or coming to a stage voluntarily which is almost like being dead, but is not actual death.

During the Turiya state (i.e. the 4th state) of existence of the consciousness, the Atma lives uniformly in all the other three states, viz. the waking, the dreaming and the deep sleeping. It is not limited to one or the other state, and therefore would display all the signs that are unique to each of these states taken separately as well as in a composite manner. In the Turiya state therefore the man would display the combined character traits that are the result of a

combination of all the individual traits of these three states of existence. Beyond this is the Turiyateet state (i.e. the 5th state) in which the Atma goes beyond the restrictions and limitations of the other four states and becomes free from any of their encumbrances. This is a state in which Brahm exists and his realisation is possible. It is the pinnacle of spiritual pursuits, the highest rung that one can climb before all spiritual achievements bear fruit, and which would enable the aspirant to come face to face with Brahm, i.e. become Brahm-realised, to witness and experience Brahm first hand.

The *Turiyateet Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes in detail the characteristic features of spiritual aspirants who have reached this most exalted state of existence of the Atma.

The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 149-151 says that the four states of existence of consciousness is symbolic of the dominance of the vital life giving Pran in the four areas of the body as follows—(a) the 'Jagrat' state or waking state relates to the area of the body between the navel and the heart; (b) the 'Swapna' or dreaming state of consciousness relates to the area of the body in the region of the throat; (c) the 'Sushupta' or deep sleep state of consciousness relates to the middle of the eyebrows and the forehead; and (d) the 'Turiya' state of consciousness relates to the area on the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra is situated. In this context, the fifth state would be when the Pran escapes from the body be piercing through the Brahm Randhra, thereby giving the spiritual aspirant permanent liberation and deliverance form the bondage of the gross body. This is the 'Turiya Teet' state of blessedness of the Atma or soul. Refer also Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/12-93/15 of Krishna Yajur Veda.

(B) **The 7 states of existence**—these have been described in Mahopanishad, canto 5, verse nos. 8-20 of Sam Veda tradition. Briefly they are the following—(i) 'Beej Jagrat' (बीज जाग्रत—the elementary waking state of consciousness), (ii) 'Jagrat' (जाग्रत—or normal waking state of consciouness), (iii) 'Maha Jagrat' (महा जाग्रत—or a greater waking state), (iv) 'Jagrat Swapna' (जाग्रत स्वप्न—or a state in which a person is mislead to erroneously believe in anything while he is wide awake in this world; literally meaning to 'day dream', or dream of imaginary thinks while a man is wide awake), (v) 'Swapna' (स्वप्न—or a dreaming state of consciousness), (vi) 'Swapna-Jagrat' (स्वप्न जाग्रत—or a state when a person's dreams last long enough to influence him and he lives in his dreams so much so that they affect his mind while he is awake), (vii) 'Sushupta' (सुव्युप्ता—or the deep sleep state of consciousness).

These seven states of existence of the consciousness interact with each other in numerous permutations and combinations to results in its innumerable forms and shapes. Now listen to their individual characteristics.

Now let us examine what role the mind and brain plays in these various states of existences. The mind has two parts—viz. the conscious and the sub-conscious. The conscious part of the mind consists of only five percent of the total mental life of a man, while the rest, i.e. ninety five percent, consists of the sub-conscious. During the waking state of conscious, the rational mind or the conscious mind works, while the inputs that are gathered during the waking

state are stored in the memory bank of the sub-conscious and they come into play when the man is sleeping. The dream is actually the sub-conscious mind playing out what it has learnt during waking state of the mind. The dream more often than not tells the man what he does not realise or does not pay attention to during his waking state; they are in fact the attempt of the mind to bring to our attention what we have been neglecting during the waking state of the mind.

The concept of dream has been elaborately explained in *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad* in Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 9—13 and 16.

Sigmund Freud believed that every action is motivated by our 'unconscious', and that dreams are a way of wish fulfillment in civilised society where people have to repress their urges. According to him, some of these urges and fantasies could be quite ridiculous and shocking, and hence the mind releases these pent up feelings in the symbolic language of the dream. Freud divided the mind into three parts or sections—viz. the ID (the unconscious centered on primal urges and desires), the Ego (concerned with the conscious and rational aspect of the self; it negotiates with the ID while keeping a reality check on urges and desires), and the Super-ego (which includes our conscious and the moral aspects of the self that we pick up from around us). Thus he said that dreams are a way in which the ID speaks out when our conscious mind is asleep.

The 'sleeping state', with an emphasis on the dream phase has been elaborately explained in *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Brahman 1, verse nos. 17-20 as well as Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 9-13, 16.

During the 'waking state', the Atma acts through the gross body (the physical body) of a man in its interaction with the outside world. During the 'dream state of existence', the Atma withdraws from the gross body and limits its interaction to the subtle body (the mind-intellect complex). During the 'deep sleep state of existence', the Atma withdraws itself into the causal body which is surrounded by various 'Vasanas' (inherent passions and desires) and 'Vrittis' (inherent tendencies and inclinations). But the pure consciousness, when it plunges within itself, that is, inside the causal body called the bliss sheath, it attains absolute bliss. This is called the 4th state called 'Turiya state of existence', and it is obtained by ascetics during Samadhi (a trance like state) when all the three sheaths covering the soul —food/air, mind/intellect and bliss —are removed. With the removal of these various sheaths, the Atma/soul of the individual (which is pure microcosmic consciousness) merges itself with the vast space around it (called the macrocosmic consciousness) because all separating sheaths have been done away with.

To explain the above concept, we may take the help of diagram and illustration:—

Man = Pure consciousness or Atma + Causal body (Vasanas)
+ Subtle body (mind-intellect) + Gross body (sense organs)

The body-mind-intellect is inane and inert. The live factor is the pure consciousness or Atma. This pure consciousness functions through its association with the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body, or in other words, the deep sleeper, the dreamer and the waker state of consciousness.

	Body	(Consisting of)		Called the	
	Gross body	(sense organs)	⇔	Waker	
Man →	Subtle body	(mind-intellect)	⇔	Dreamer	←Atma (pure-
	Causal body	(Vasanas)	⇔	Deep sleeper	consciousness)

This combination of 'waker-dreamer-deep sleeper' states of consciousness of a man is called Microcosm. The pure consciousness has its independent existence from the above three states, and this independence is called the 4th state of consciousness called the 'Turiya state' or the eternal blissful state of consciousness, called 'Chidanand', which has the bliss sheath as its external boundary.

According to *Hanso-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, the Atma resides in the heart of the creature which is in an 8-petal lotus. The tendrils (केसर) of this lotus described in this Upanishad represent the waking state of consciousness, the stalk (कर्णिका) represents the dream state of conscious, and the thalamus represents the deep sleep state of consciousness. When a creature abandons/discards the metaphoric habitat or dwelling in the 8-petal lotus represents by his heart and rises above its precincts (just like a householder snapping all his relationships with his home and takes to the path of Vanprastha), it obtains the forth state of consciousness called the 'Turiya state'. Eventually, when the creature, in the form of his subtle Atma (which according to the definition given to it by the Upanishad, inter alia, is 'Hans' which means a 'Swan' and is a metaphor for divinity, purity and wisdom) merges with or dissolves in the cosmic 'Naad' (all-pervading subtle sound in the cosmos), then the final or the so-called 'Turiyateet' stage is achieved (verse no. 8).

(4) Macrocosm and Microcosm:--In metaphysics, we come across two levels of creation--viz. the *Microcosm* and the *Macrocosm*. Though they appear to be distinct from one another, but in the larger scheme or scale of things they are the same just like a single molecule of water with the formulae H_20 is the same whether in a cup or spoon and the vast, fathomless ocean. Here, the microcosm refers to the individual creature/Jiva/man, and the macrocosm refers to the Viraat/Lord God/Nature. Since Upanishads regard the entire creation as manifestation of one single non-dual entity known as the pure consciousness which is the Atma or soul of the individual creature at the micro level and the cosmic consciousness or Supreme Soul of the entire creation at the macro leve, both essentially refer to the same entity.

This Microcosm is the same as the Macrocosm in the larger scheme or scale of things, just like a single molecule of water with the formulae H_20 is the same whether in a cup or spoon and the vast, fathomless ocean. Here, the microcosm refers to the individual creature/Jiva/man and the macrocosm refers to the Viraat/Lord God/Nature.

Now, as has been explained in the foregoing discussion, it is relatively easy to control the subtle and the gross bodies through acquisition of truthful knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. The greatest problem arises with the causal body consisting of Vrittis

and Vasanas (passions and desires; inherent tendencies and inclinations). This can be solved by integrating the objective mind (the 'mind') and the subjective mind (the 'intellect'). When both are integrated, then the creature reacts in a healthy manner. When actions are controlled by the wisened intellect, the inherent tendencies of the creature fail to exert their influence on it and they gradually vanish (i.e. removed or catheterized). This results in the seeker merging his Microcosm with the Macrocosm.

According to Upanishadic sages/seers, 'Life' can be understood to be a series of experiences and that any definition of life should necessarily accept our moment-to-moment experiences as the units of life. The sages/seers further understood that an experience is not possible without three fundamental factors—the experiencer, the object of experience, and the relationship between the two, the experiencing. The experiencer is the subject who gains experiences of the world through the instruments of experience, namely, the body, mind, and intellect. Everyone gains experiences of three different worlds through these three different equipments viz. through the body, the world of objects; through the mind, the world of feelings; and through the intellect, the world of ideas.

If a person experiences the world of objects through his body, then he should be different from his body. If he experiences the world of feelings through his mind, then he, the experiencer, cannot be the mind. Again, if he gains experiences of the world of ideas through the intellect, he cannot be the intellect. He seems to be a different factor or entity altogether from these three instruments of experiences, though, of course, he has a very intimate relationship with them.

When the subject is identified with the intellect, he becomes the 'thinker', experiencing the world of ideas; when identified with the mind, he becomes the 'feeler' experiencing the world of emotions; and when identified with the body, he becomes the 'perceiver' experiencing the world of objects. But he, the subject, is neither the field of experience nor the instruments of experience. He must be totally different from them both.

The effect that ego and desires (Ahankar and Kaam) as well as Vasanas and Vrittis (inherent desires and tendencies) have on the mind, how they corrupt the objective mind and how their removal/catheterization purifies the mind and brings it under the direct control of the subjective mind (the intellect) of the creature is explained with the help of a diagram at the end of this appendix.

The *relationship between microcosm and macrocosm* varies according to the individual personality of the man. The grossest man with the maximum load of Vasanas and Vrittis imagines a wide chasm/gulf between the microcosm and the macrocosm. As the individual cleanses or purges himself of these inherent tendencies, this blending increases, and when it vanishes altogether, the distinction between the two also vanishes i.e. there is oneness between the microcosmic soul (creature's Atma) and the macrocosmic soul (Parmatma). This will be clear with the help of diagrams appended to this appendix.

According to the theory of Vedant, the Lord has two forms–Macrocosmic and Microcosmic. The macrocosmic form of the Lord is the Viraat which is huge, large, colossus,

vast, gigantic, beyond all measurement. The microcosmic form of the Lord is the miniscule creature of this world. The gross body of the Lord vis-à-vis the gross body of the creature are clarified Diagrammatically below:—

Microcosmic (creature)		**Macrocosmic (Viraat Lord)**
(i) Individual gross body (food+vital-air sheath)	=	Total of all gross bodies is called Viraat
(ii) Individual subtle body (the mind-intellect sheath)	=	Total of the subtle bodies is called Hiranyagarbha
(iii) Individual causal body (bliss sheath)	=	Total of causal bodies is called Ishwar
This is the single creature		**This is the sum total of all the creatures represented by the Lord.**

From the metaphysical perspective, the existent world has three faces or facets—the gross, the subtle and the causal. Again, these three exist at two levels—the all-encompassing and vast macrocosmic level, and the individual unit of creation at the microcosmic level. The former has three components—the *Viraat, Hiranyagarbha* and *Ishwar* respectively, while the latter also has the following three components—the *Vishwa, Taijas* and *Pragya* respectively.

Now let us see each one of them and their relevance. The Vishwa refers to the gross body of the creature, i.e. his sense organs of perception and action which makes him aware of the external material and artificial world during his waking state; the Taijas refers to the subtle body of the creature, i.e. the mind-intellect complex that is active in his dreaming state of consciousness when the external physical world has ceased to exist but the mind still conjures up a colourful picture of the world in the dream and keeps itself as well the consciousness as active in it as in the physical world; and Pragya is causal body of the creature, i.e. the deep sleep state of consciousness when the mind has also ceased to exist.

Similarly, the three levels of existence at the macro level of creation are called respectively Viraat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwar. The word Viraat refers to the gross body of the cosmic consciousness that is vast and all-incorporating ('Viraat') and forms the sum total of all the gross bodies that exist at the micro level of creation; the Hiranyagarbha, literally the golden egg of the creation, refers to the subtle body of this Viraat from which the latter has emerged; and Ishwar is the macro level counterpart of the causal body of the creature, i.e. it represents the causal body of the Viraat and the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation.

Since the 'body' must have some living entity residing in it, it follows that this 'someone' or 'some living entity' is different from the body and it uses the body merely as its habitat or dwelling. This 'living entity' is known as the supreme transcendental consciousness called the Atma of the individual at the micro level of creation, and Brahm at

the macro level. It is 'transcendental' because it goes beyond the limitations and definitions of the gross or subtle body. Since Brahm is the 'cause' of the entire creation coming into being, the inner chamber of the body where it lives is called 'causal'—one that causes something to happen. The counterpart of Brahm in the creature's body is the Atma. It is called 'consciousness' simply because it is the only truly living entity in the otherwise entirely inert and inane gross body made up of different elements which are themselves lifeless and lack any inherent consciousness in them besides being perishable and comparatively gross as compared to the pure Consciousness. Since the living being shows all signs of life and consciousness, since it has emotions and feelings, it is more akin to this Atma than it is to the gross inert body. This fact is acknowledged when the scriptures assert and affirm that the true nature and identity of the creature is the Atma and not the body in which this Atma lives.

Hiranyagarbha is the macrocosmic subtle body of Brahm, so called because it is akin to the cosmic golden egg lying in the womb of Brahm from which emerged the Viraat Purush, the gross body of Brahm at the macrocosmic level of creation. The word Hiranyagarbha has two components—'Hiranya' meaning yellow, and 'Garbha' meaning the womb. Hiranyagarbha was the primordial cosmic fertilised egg, deriving its name from the fact that its yolk core was yellow and glowing with an incandescent light like the one radiating out from the splendorous Sun in the sky, called the Maartand.

There are different versions regarding this Hiranyagarbha. According to the concept of Vedanta, Brahm is the cosmic supreme and transcendental Consciousness residing in the macrocosmic causal body called the Ishwar. In this context, when Brahm decided to reveal or unfold this creation, first the causal body known as a Ishwar developed the macrocosmic subtle body called the Hiranyagarbha, and from this evolved the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm called the Viraat Purush. This is the picture at the macrocosmic level. All these three sublime bodies of Brahm at the cosmic level—viz. Ishwar, Hiranyagarbha and Viraat Purush—were invisible, subtle, unqualified, without any attributes, all-inclusive and all-pervading. It was the unrevealed form of Brahm. But that was just the beginning.

When this visible world was created, which had attributes and qualifications, the same macrocosmic units of Brahm metamorphosed themselves into their respective counterparts in the individual creature's body. Hence, Ishwar is represented by the Pragya or the individual's causal body, Hiranyagarbha is represented by the Taijas or the individual's subtle body, and the Viraat Purush is represented by the Vishwa or the individual's gross body.

These three bodies are the three states in which consciousness exists, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. At the microcosmic level, the Pragya relates to the deep sleeper state of consciousness called the Sushupta state, the Taijas relates to the dreamer state of consciousness called Swapna state, and the Vishwa relates to the waking state of consciousness called Jagrat state. The three corresponding states at the macrocosmic level are the Ishwar which relates to the cosmic deep sleep state of Consciousness called cosmic Sushupta, the Hiranyagarbha which relates to the cosmic dreamer state of

Consciousness called cosmic Swapna, and the Viraat Purushh which relates to the cosmic waking state of Consciousness called cosmic Jagrat. A separate appendix of this volume explains these and other related matters with the help of sketches in detail.

According to Purans, the Hiranyagarbha refers to the Brahma the creator, as well as to the Viraat Purush because Brahma was born atop a lotus that emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu who is no one else but the Viraat Purush. If the word 'Hiranyagarbha' is to indicate the cosmic egg, then it was from this egg, lodged in the womb-like navel of Vishnu, that Brahma emerged. Hence, the 'original creator' was not Brahma but the Viraat Purush as Vishnu, and therefore the latter is the Hiranyagarbha—the golden cosmic egg. So we conclude that Hiranyagarbha essentially refers to the cosmic egg from which the rest of the creation evolved. Since Brahma is said to be the great grandfather of this creation, he is aptly named Hiranyagarbha, i.e. the cosmic egg from which this visible and gross form of creation evolved.

This entire concept of Hiranyagarbha being produced from the body of the Supreme Being called Narayan or Ishwar have been elaborately dealt with in *Maho-panishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 8 of the Sam Veda tradition, and in *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad*, verse no. 49 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The Hiranyagarbha is very subtle like the mind-intellect of the creature. The mind-intellect is also called the subtle body because it is through this mind-intellect that the Atma of the individual creature creates this world by using the mind's stupendous ability to imagine, envision and conceptualise things, and then using the intellect to justify it to be true, real and logical. But this instrument of the mind-intellect is invisible, is so subtle and hidden from view that its presence is only deduced by its astounding potentials which are manifested in the form of the gross body and its own stupendous capabilities. Whatever the mind wishes to do, it gets it done by the body.

This Hiranyagarbha is like the musk present in the body of the musk deer. The deer is not able to see the musk but is nevertheless maddened by its perfume, running mad in search of the source of the perfume not knowing that it is hidden well inside its own body. Similarly, the creature is unaware that the supreme Brahm is residing in his own bosom as the pure consciousness called the Atma while he spends his entire life searching for it everywhere in the outside world.

There is another connotation to this observation. Since the mind is the creator of the world by its power of imagination, and then sustaining or perpetuating its own creation by believing in the truthfulness and reality of the world, it is therefore the mind itself that can conclude this world. So, while it is like Brahma the creator, it is also like Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. If the same mind can assume three roles, it is not incongruous to believe that the same Hiranyagarbha is Brahma and Vishnu simultaneously. Since Shiva is a synonym used for the supreme transcendental Brahm—because the word 'Shiva' stands for an entity that is truthful, beautiful, auspicious, divine and holy as affirmed by a number of Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition that deal with the 'Shiva Tattwa',

this Hiranyagarbha is also Shiva.

Hiranyagarbha is also called Maartanda, the Sun, because of its golden colour and brilliance like the golden yellow and brilliant disc of the sun in the sky. Like the light of the sun illuminates the world and brings everything in it to light or knowledge, the Hiranyagarbha too brings to the fore the intentions of Brahm by revealing this vast creation. The Hiranyagarbha had spread the sacred divinity, the stupendous glory, the dazzling radiance and the brilliant splendour through the length and breath of the vast realm of the cosmos like the sun spreading its glory on the earth by way of its energy, light, heat and warmth.

The word 'Hiranyam' also refers to 'Amrit or elixir or nectar of eternity and bliss'; it also means 'green'. That is why greenery is associated with fertility, vibrancy, life and abundance of food and plentiful vegetation. The trees are green, and their precursor, the algae and moss, were also green. Indeed the food is the elixir of life in the world—nothing can ever survive without food and water. So, 'Hiranyagarbha' first created these to initiate the process of creation, and then sustained them once the process got under way. The 'Viraat Purush' as well as the 'Hiranyagarbha' are both used often synonymously to indicate the macrocosmic forms of the Male aspect of creation whose female counterpart is called 'Nature' or Shakti. The Shakti is the dynamic aspect of Brahm's creative powers and an effective method of displaying the Lord's cosmic authority.

Taking the example of this material world, physical science tells us that everything has a visible structure that depends upon molecules which themselves are formed by arrangement of atoms in different permutations and combinations. The atoms also have a world of their own, with the electrons circulating the central nucleus consisting of the protons and the neutrons. When we apply this theory to metaphysical understanding of creation, we can draw a parallel and deduce that the visible physical world is the gross body of Brahm, the molecules are the subtle body, and the atom is the causal body. The nucleus of the atom without which the atom—and therefore the entire edifice of the material world dependent upon this atom—would cease to have an existence is the Brahm of Vedanta. This would be the macrocosmic view of creation. Its microcosmic partner would be the atom itself—with its rounded structure being the gross body, the component of the electrons, neutrons and protons etc. being its subtle body, while the nucleus itself would be causal body which houses the neutrons, protons and other sub-atomic forces that regulate the functioning of the edifice of the atom as a whole.

The *Yog Kundalini Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, verse nos. 20-23, says that these three aspects of creation are mirrored in the three physical aspects of the world—the terrestrial world of physical bodies created out the first encrypted word 'Bhu' uttered by the creator Brahma at the time of creation which corresponds to the gross form of existence, the world above the earth, i.e. the subtle world of the sky created out of the second word 'Bhuvaha' which would correspond to the subtle body of creation, and the heaven where the exalted Gods live which was created by the third word 'Swaha' corresponding to the causal body of creation. The supreme power that uttered these words and made the creation possible is the supreme transcendental Divinity known in the Upanishads as Brahm,

the Supreme Being at the macro level of creation, and as the Atma at the micro level of creation.

According to the *Chaturvada Upanishad*, verse no. 1, the seeds of the three worlds that would come into existence were encrypted in the three words that the creator Brahma had pronounced at the time of creation. They were—'Bhu' from which was created the mortal world represented by earth and its inhabitants, 'Bhuvaha' from which the space above the earth was created, i.e. the world of the sky where birds as well as Spirits etc. would live, and 'Swaha' represented the heavens where the Gods would have their abode.

This phenomenon can be best understood with the example of the huge tree with numerous branches, multicolored flowers, succulent fruits and big and small leaves. The entire tree has had its origin in one single seed. This seed is like the 'Brahmaand' or universe in a miniature form, while the tree itself is the unfolded universe. The hidden supreme power that empowers the apparently inert-looking seed to sprout into a green shoot and grow into this huge vibrant tree full of life and joie-de-vivre is called the supreme Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness present in the seed that enables the latter to 'sprout life'. The seed itself is the causal body, while the young sprout would be the subtle body from which is created the huge gross body of the colourful tree.

(5) Vrittis and Vasanas:- 'All human actions have one or more of these 7 causes — chance, nature, compulsion, habit, passion and desire' —Aristotle.

'Do not ye yet understand that what so entereth the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those thing that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart (and the mind); and they defile the man for out of the heart (and the mind) proceed evil thought, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness (lies), blasphemies. These are the thing that defile a man' (Bible, St. Matthew, 15/17-20).

The pure consciousness (Atma) is the core of a man's personality. It is infinite, pure, all-pervading, omniscient, enlightened, changeless and supreme truth/reality. However, its infinite nature is clouded by the various Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations) and Vasanas (desires and passion inherent in a man) resulting in the creation of a finite, limited, impure, corrupt, not fully enlightened, ever changing personality of the human being—such a person is called the 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer' entity. When the various Vrittis or Vasanas are eliminated or excluded (i.e. catheterised), the attitude undergoes transformation and metamorphosis from a perceiver-feeler-thinker entity (corresponding to the gross body, the mind and intellect collectively called the subtle body) into simple pure consciousness which, in reality, is the true identity of the creature. Please see the diagram appended to this appendix for further clarification on this subject.

Man's real and truthful nature is pure consciousness but he passes through the three different, distinct, relative states of the waker, dreamer and deep sleeper states as a result of the interaction or play of consciousness in the Gross, the Subtle and the Causal bodies respectively. No sooner the identification of the pure consciousness with any one or more of these bodies is removed than his original, pure, natural form is unfolded. This

state is called self-realisation, or Godhood—or it is also called the state of supreme and sublime bliss, joy, happiness, peace and tranquility. Hence, when the pleural personality is removed, the real, singularly unique personality shines through.

It is the Atma which ignites/kindles/infuses life in the other five sheaths which are, left to themselves, inert and lifeless even as a piece of iron is lifeless without the infusion of life into it by a magnet held nearby. This magnet is separate and distinct from the iron but it invisibly gives life to the dead, gross and inert piece of iron. The iron is the five sheaths and the magnet is the Atma. Remove the Atma and the man is as lifeless as the piece of iron.

The Vasanas and Vrittis are the different inherent tendencies and habits that the creature had inherited from its past and which shape its present passions, desires, inclinations, deeds, conduct and behaviours.

Now let us analyse these two concepts of Vrittis and Vasanas.

(a) *Vrittis*— The term Vritti refers to the natural inclinations and habits of the mind and its wayward tendencies. Since the mind controls one's attention, thoughts and intelligence, the extended form of this term includes the natural tendency of the creature to veer towards things which give it instant gratification and pleasure even at the cost of its long term harm. Even as Pranayam is considered as the bulwark in the field of meditation exercises as it helps to cleanse the body of all toxins and prepare the practitioner to progress further in his spiritual practice, control of Vrittis is equally important and effective tool to help him to control his mind which is at the root of all activities.

The pure consciousness called the Atma is the core of a man's personality. It is infinite, pure, all-pervading, omniscient, enlightened, changeless and supreme truth/reality. However, its infinite nature is clouded by the various Vrittis (inherent and inborn tendencies and inclinations) and Vasanas (desires, lusts and passions that are inherent in a man) resulting in the creation of a finite, limited, impure, corrupt, not fully enlightened, ever changing personality of the human being—such a person is called the 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer' entity. When the various Vrittis or Vasanas are eliminated or excluded (i.e. catheterised), the attitude undergoes transformation and metamorphosis from a perceiver-feeler-thinker entity (corresponding to the gross body, the mind and intellect collectively called the subtle body) into simple pure consciousness which, in reality, is the true identity of the creature. Please see the diagram appended to this appendix for further clarification on this subject.

Man's real and truthful nature is pure consciousness but he passes through the three different, distinct, relative states of the waker, dreamer and deep sleeper states as a result of the interaction or play of consciousness in the Gross, the Subtle and the Causal bodies respectively. No sooner the identification of the pure consciousness with any one or more of these bodies is removed than his original, pure, natural form is unfolded. This state is called self-realisation, or Godhood—or it is also called the state of supreme and sublime bliss, joy, happiness, peace and tranquility. Hence, when the pleural personality is removed, the real, singularly unique personality shines through.

It is the Atma which ignites/kindles/infuses life in the other five sheaths which are, left to themselves, inert and lifeless, even as a piece of iron is lifeless without the infusion of life into it by a magnet held nearby. This magnet is separate and distinct from the iron but it invisibly gives life to the dead, gross and inert piece of iron. The iron is the five sheaths and the magnet is the Atma. Remove the Atma and the man is as lifeless as the piece of iron.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 31 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition asserts that control of the various Vrittis is tantamount to doing Pranayam (a meditative exercise whereby the aspirant controls his vital winds, especially his breath in order to acquire great mystical powers). To quote—"True form of Pranayam (exercising restraint of the vital winds) is when one is able to restrain all his mental 'Vrittis', and have a firmness of mind and conviction with regard to the fact that this entire creation is Brahm personified, that there is nothing in existence that is not Brahm."

The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 54 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition emphasises that a Videha Mukta person (i.e. a spiritually liberated person who might live like an ordinary man with a body in this world) is the one who has overcome all his Vrittis. To quote—"A Videha Mukta person is one who is free from all 'Vrittis', i.e. he has no habits, tendencies, inclinations and impulses that normally form a part of a man's natural character, driving all his actions and determining his behavioural patterns and overall personality.

Since all these characteristic Vrittis are related to the body and not to the ethereal Spirit, the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful 'self' of the wise, self-realised and spiritually enlightened person, such a man is deemed to be Videha Mukta—that is, he is a person who is free from all the fetters of ignorance and its attending delusions that pertain to the fallacious notion that the body is the true 'self' instead of the Atma (54)."

According to *Hanso-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, the Atma resides in the heart which is shaped like an 8-petal lotus. Each petal of this lotus symbolises one type of 'Vritti'. The petal facing to the east represents the righteous and noble inclinations; the petal facing south-east corner (Agneya) represents sleep, drowsiness, lethargy, inertia, and disinclination to work; the petal facing to the south direction represents cruel tendencies; the petal facing in the south-west angle (Nairitya) represents the inclination of the mind to be sinful, unrighteous and pervert; the petal facing towards the west represents the desires for sports, action and play; that petal facing to the north-west direction (Vaayabya) represents the desire to be on the move, to go, roam and wander; the petal in the north direction represents the affection of a creature for Brahm, its true self and its desires to endear it; the petal in the north-east direction (Ishan) represents the desires for charity; and the petals surrounding the thalamus represent the tendency to renounce, to be dispassionate and detached from the artificial, sensual world. [Refer verse no. 8 of this Upanishad.]

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 5, verse no. 24 describes four Vrittis that affect a man's behaviour, thoughts, temperaments and deeds. These are also called the four Anthakarans. To quote—"All the fourteen instruments that prevail upon the basically steady and uniform consciousness to be extrovert, ever-changing, restless and

active outwardly have only one basic instigating cause, and it is one's inherent Virttis which determine his thoughts, behaviour and actions as well as his latent temperaments, inclinations, wishes and desires that are hidden inside his bosom. [The fourteen instruments are the following—5 organs of perception such as eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin + 5 organs of action such as hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive + 4 Anthakarans such as Mana, Buddhi, Chitta and Ahankar = 14.]

It is said that there are four Vrittis inherent in a man—and they are Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankar (ego, false sense of pride). One's behavioural and thought patterns are governed by the various permutations and combinations of these four factors."

(b) *Vasanas*--Vasanas are the numerous attractions, desires, yearnings, infatuations and other natural inclinations of the creature that tie him to this world. Vasanas arise because a man thinks that one thing is better than the other and that he must get hold of the better choice. The Vasanas are deep-rooted impressions that define the texture of a man's mind and intellect. On the other hand, intentions are conscious thoughts that determine his actions. Vasanas are innate inclinations and tendencies which form the propelling force behind a man's desires, thoughts and actions.

Vasanas/Vasnas are the numerous attractions, desires, yearnings, infatuations and other natural inclinations of the creature that tie him to this world. Vasanas arise because a man thinks that one thing is better than the other and that he must get hold of the better choice. The Vasanas are deep-rooted impressions that define the texture of a man's mind and intellect. On the other hand, intentions are conscious thoughts that determine his actions. Vasanas are innate inclinations and tendencies which form the propelling force behind a man's desires, thoughts and actions.

The Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad describes the concept of Vasana in great detail in its Canto 1, verse nos. 29-32, 54; Canto 4, verse nos. 25, 46-48, 52, 54-56, 58, 61-62, 74, 78-83; Canto 5, verse nos. 5, 15-18, 37-40, 48, 62, 82.

Krishna Yajur Veda's Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-2 assert that Vasana is a major factor which keep the mind agitated and in a state of constant flux; it never allows the mind to rest. The other factor is the Pran, or the vital winds that keep the physical body active and its organs running towards their respective sense objects in the world.

Classification of Vasanas:—There are many ways to classify the Vasanas. Let us examine them one by one as follows.

(i) The Vasanas are of three types—viz. (a) *Lok Vasana*—this is the desire and greed for wealth, fame, sense objects of the material world, territorial gains, authority and powers, majesty, pomp and pelf etc. The Vasanas relating to the world are the various attractions and allurements that his apparently enchanting and captivating world presents to a person. It also refers to the various and endless responsibilities and obligations, real and imaginary, that a person has, or imagines he has towards this world.

Sometimes the Lok Vasanas overlaps the Deha Vasana as often they are interconnected. For example, one's 'Vasanas' pertaining to one's son, property, material wealth and other assets which a person has acquired by the efforts made by his body and which help him to get established in this world and enjoy enhanced comforts and pleasures as well as respect and honour that such acquisitions entitle him to in this physical world also come under this category of Vasanas. All such relationships that exist in this world, such as his relatives, his contacts, his friends, his peers and compatriots, along with his obligations, his contracts and his responsibilities related to them are called Lok Vasanas. It would also include all things done by him in this world to appease those who are related to him with this body.

(b) *Shastra Vasana*—this is the desire and yearnings related to scriptures and ancient literature, such as a desire to become an expert in them and be recognised as such, the desire to study them more and more, acquiring scholarship and literal expertise in them with its accompanying fame, renown, glory, honour, respect and financial prosperity, become much sought after and acquire a wide followership based on these qualities and honours bestowed upon them by the world by the virtue of their unique abilities and expertise of the scriptures etc. But usually such knowledge is superficial, and the so-called expert of scriptures relies more on their letter rather than on their spirit, engrossing himself in endless discussions and debates leading to confusions and contradictions instead of solving them. The scriptures are vast and like a fathomless sea. Trying to realise the Supreme Truth by delving into the depths of the scriptures is like an attempt at extracting a single piece of pearl by churning the whole ocean. Though it is theoretically possible in thousand of years of continuous effort, but practically it is impossible and incredulous to even think of such a success; it is a too far-fetched notion. It is rare to find a truly wise and enlightened soul amongst worldly scholars and orators, for the latter's erudition is limited to gaining fame and name and nothing more.

(c) *Deha Vasana* –this is the insatiable desire and passion related to the gratification of the sense organs, such as becoming licentious, engrossing oneself in enjoyment of worldly sensual objects, and all other types of indulgences and gratifications. The 'Vasanas' pertaining to the body also relate to the attachments that one has with one's son, property and wealth which a person has acquired and enjoyed with his body, and the world around him—his relatives, his fame, his contacts, his friends, his obligation, contracts and responsibilities. It also means gratification of the sense organs of the body as well as to appease those who are related to him with this body so that they continue to serve and help him and give comfort and pleasure to his body.

Now, when we talk of the Atma as pure consciousness or an embodiment of light, the question arises 'how can we obtain the clearest perception of that reality?' The greatest exponent of Vedanta philosophy, sage Adi Sankaracharya prescribes the following four paths—(i) discrimination between the eternal and truthful, and the non-eternal and non-truthful, (ii) renunciation of desires for sensual gratification and enjoyment of pleasures from this materialistic world, (iii) development of six divine eclectic wealth—self control, surrender, faith, forbearance, peace/tranquility and poise of the mind, and (iv) sincere desire for liberation and deliverance,

because it is only then that the creature will try to find ways to achieve it.

(ii) *Another classification* is based on the proportion of bad or good qualities inherent in and integral to the nature of a man. Therefore, there are broadly classified into Good Vasanas, and Bad Vasanas depending upon the proportion of good quality and the bad quality that is inherent in the man and forms his innate character. These qualities are called the Gunas, and they are three in number—viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. Hence, we have Satvic Vasana, Rajic Vasana and Tamsic Vasana.

The Satvic Vasanas are those desires that are determined by the predominance of the best quality called Sata in a man. Such a man is inclined to do auspicious deeds and take noble actions. He is naturally inclined to and attracted towards those things in this world which help him to cultivate higher values in life, such as the desire of serving others selflessly, being compassionate, relinquishing one's right for the general welfare of others, spending time in finding ways to achieve knowledge of the 'self', study of the scriptures and generally spending life in noble thoughts and deeds, etc.

The Rajic Vasana is the middle path which creates desires for name, fame and power and their accompanying laurels and majesty. Such tendencies need commensurate actions so that they can be effectuated. Hence such a man would be engrossed in the world and it's activities; he would serve others but would have a certain degree of self-interest in whatever he does; he would judge everything but with himself as the overriding factor. He would study the scriptures but not for his spiritual well being but to gain money and fame and a large follower-ship.

Finally, the lowest of them is the Tamsic Vasana which makes a man pervert, sinful, selfish, indulgent and indolent to the extreme. He would snatch other's right in order to fulfill his own desires; he would study the scriptures only to find fault with them and ridicule them. He would not have any qualms in making others suffer by his actions and derive immense satisfaction and pleasure in it. He would have no scruples and a sense of probity and propriety in what he does in order to satisfy his desires, wants, yearnings, aspirations and expectations.

It ought to be noted that there are no water-tight compartments in these three types of Vasanas; they are diffused and more often than not difficult to differentiate one from the other. Their intensity may change with the change in the person's attitude and the level at which his thought processes as well as his mind and intellect operate as he develops wisdom and knowledge.

Vasanas arise due to one's desire to gratify the natural instincts of the sense organs. Such as for example, the eye has a natural urge to see beautiful objects. So if a man falls prey to this urge, his mind and intellect would come into play and the man would then try everything in his means and power to acquire that object which pleases the eye, thereby dragging other organs in this quagmire. Each organ would then make its own demand, and the demands never cease but go on multiplying in a compound manner. Actions prompted by the element of ego and egocentric desires such as the attitude of 'I, Me and Mine' leave in their wake a chain of desires and wants which keep us prodding, propelling and compelling to satisfy them, and the

chain of Vasanas is set in motion.

So the easy way to stem the surge of Vasanas and finally obliterate them is to first analyse one's natural inclinations and tendencies, and then slowly divert them from lower level to a higher level by conscious effort and diligence. One of the methods to do this is to do deeds but without expecting any rewards from them—which is at the core of Karma Yoga. With this attitude, the accumulation of Vasanas is gradually exhausted. Another way is to acquire truthful knowledge by studying the scriptures directly or getting to know about their great tenets and teachings from others. This helps to remove 'Agyan' or ignorance of the reality and truth which is at the very root of the creation of Vasanas in the first place. If one becomes wise and gets acquainted with great metaphysical truths about the 'self' and the Atma along with the nature of existence and its essential form as well as the real goal of human life in spiritual terms, it would be natural and logical that he would be more inclined to overcome all sorts of Vasanas, including the Satvic ones. In fact, he would have no Vasanas at all.

The Krishna Yajur Veda's *Yog Kundali Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 1-2 refer to the Vasana as a major factor which keep the mind turned towards the world of material sense objects, and therefore agitated. To quote—

"Canto 1, verse no. 1 = The reason why the mind is so undecided, restless, fickle and unsteady that it cannot remain concentrated on anything for long and continues to jump from one object to another, remaining always in a state of flux, are two—viz. (a) Vasanas (natural, inherent and inborn passions, desires, yearnings and lust pertaining to the gross organs of the body and the gross sense objects of the material world which a creature carries down to this present life as a baggage from his past life) and (b) Samir (the wind or air element, here referring to the vital winds called Pran that keep the body active and restless much like the air inside the balloon; when the body is restless the mind too would be restless because the mind is directly affected by the body and its sense organs).

If a person is able to control anyone one of them, the other is automatically controlled (1)."

The various Vasanas in a person, i.e. the inherent desires and wishes, the latent passions and hidden yearnings that he has vis-à-vis the material world and its sense objects, inspire and propel him to do things in this world that would satisfy them. They manifest themselves as his Vrittis or natural urges, inclinations, tendencies and temperaments. For instance, if a man wishes to become a literary scholar and acquire name and wealth on this account in this life but fails to do so due to some reason, this unrequited desire would not die with the death of the body but would be carried over to the man's next life as his unfulfilled desire. This would create in him an overriding desire for knowledge in the new life that he has got as a result of so many other factors. So he would have the necessary inborn aptitude, natural intelligence and mental skills along with the urge and drive for knowledge that his sibling would probably lack though both have the same biological parents. This explains why two brothers or sisters vary so dramatically in their nature and habits as well as in their mental and intellectual development, and why a child often shows traits quite the opposite of the ones present in its either parents. The secret lies in

the fact that the child's 'true self' is the Atma which had acquired this new body due to the cumulative effects of so many factors related to its past life, such as the deeds done by the individual in its past life and their cumulative consequences, the unfulfilled desires and aspirations that he had, his earlier Vasanas (worldly passions, desires, yearnings etc.) and the resultant Vrittis (inclinations, habits, tendencies) that he has carried over to this new life, and so on and so forth.

Since the body is only a medium for the Atma to carry out its desires, and the body is able to perform any task only as long as the vital winds present in it allow it to function and carry out its designated duties, it follows that as long as there are Vasanas, the Samir (i.e. the vital winds or Pran present in the body) is forced to remain active so as to enable the creature to fulfill these Vasanas with the help of the body. Since the Samir is responsible for keeping the body active so that the individual can interact with the world to satisfy his list of Vasanas, it follows that the former cannot rest as long as the creature has Vasanas in him.

Interacting with the material world of astounding charms and fascinating sense objects create a new set of Vasanas for them. This is in addition to the baggage of desires and yearnings carried over from past life. Involvement with this world and attachment with the body in the erroneous belief that the world is the real thing, that it is meant to be enjoyed and lived to the full, and that the body is a person's true self and identity, creates a new wave of Vasanas. Constant interaction with the world makes the creature aware of newer opportunities and attractions of the material world, and this stokes the fire of Vasanas.

The natural corollary is that if the Vasanas are controlled, there would be no need for the body to remain active and be an active participant in the affairs of the mundane world of material sense objects that are by nature entrapping and creators of numerous problems for the creature. This translates into the Samir being put under control.

Again, since interaction with the world of stupendous material charms and full of sense objects that has a natural tendency to attract the individual towards themselves, an active Samir results in creation of fresh Vasanas.

In other words, Vasanas and Samir are inter-related; they work in close coordination. As such, if one is vanquished, if one of them is controlled, the other would naturally submit it's self. For instance, if a man has no desire for gratifying his sense organs, he would pay scant attention for the charms of the material sense objects of the world, and this lack of interest or Vasanas would calm his restlessness which is indicative of the calming of the Pran or Samir.

Keeping a safe distance from the pleasures of the sense objects and the comforts offered by the material things of the world would help eliminate a burning desire to acquire them, and then worry about their retention and enhancement. Since acquisition of material things of the world and satisfying the urges of the sense organs of the body needs deeds to be done and actions to be taken, once a man overcomes his Vasanas he automatically gives his body rest, which translates into the Samir become calmed and quietened. If the Samir is calmed down and willfully controlled, the body would be calmed down and lose its natural habit to be restive, which would mean that it would no longer be obsessive about the thoughts of the world

which gratifies its sense organs, and would instead accept whatever comes its way with a great degree of equanimity and dispassion. It would no longer yearn for sense gratifications and attempt to indulge in the enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures of the world which however is intrinsically deluding and entrapping. Thus, the individual is able to avoid creation of new Vasanas.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 70, describes how a wise and enlightened man gets rid of his Vasanas. To quote—

"Verse no. 70 = When one has realised the supreme truth of Brahm and its principle tenets, there is no difference left then between the Lord of all and the Jiva (the individual living being). When one has known that supreme Truth in its essential non-dual form, all sorts of Vasanas are got rid of (70)."

The Muktiko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of Vasanas in its Canto 2, verse nos. 57-61, and 68. In this Upanishad, Lord Ram explains to his most ardent devotee, the wise and enlightened Hanuman the concept of Vasanas and how to purge and control them in order to attain emancipation and salvation. The Lord advises Hanuman here to delineate this conscious soul from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through. The enlightened soul is akin to the lighted wick of a candle, while the layers of Vasanas are like the sheets of plastic—some black, some colourless and others colourful—surrounding the light emanting from the candle. So, removal of the Vasanas is like removing the various veils from around the candle so that its light can shine brilliantly through in all the directions and slice through the darkness of the room and illuminate all the corners of it.

Generally speaking, the drag of Vasanas and Vrittis (i.e. inherent tendencies, notions, innate habits, desires, yearnings etc.) of a creature, which create a hindrance in its contact with the pure self, can be overcome by the following four methods:- (i) Method of persuasion—the creature tries to convince itself though reasoning, discrimination, self analysis and gentle prodding that its true identity is not the body but the soul or Atma which is the real and truthful self. (ii) Method of purification—the creature loves itself so much that its mind is blocked from all other love. This can be purged by thinking of the wider world as the beautiful extension of the self. Thus, selfishness is gradually reduced and it is replaced by love, compassion and graciousness. (iii) Method of eradication of desires—this can be done by selfless action and removal of ego. (iv) Method of forceful confrontation—the seeker should confront its mind about its wayward behaviour and force it to overcome past habits and tendencies. Efforts should be made to control the mind's restlessness—diligently, courteously and persistently.

Now let us examine the Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 57-61, 68 and see what they have to say on this subject which has great bearing on the creature's spiritual liberation—

"verse no. 57 = Further definition of Vasana:- The tendency of the mind-intellect to firmly accept as the truth the gross and outwardly appearances of any object (i.e. accepting the object of this perishable materialistic world at its face value) instead of determining its true and

real nature (i.e. instead of finding the truth behind the illusionary and more often than not misleading façade) is called the fault of the 'Chitta', and it is also the cause of various 'Vasanas' (57).

"verse nos. 58-60 = Oh the best amongst the monkeys! The mind-intellect complex comes between the Atma and the gross body of the creature consisting of the sense organs. In other words, the Atma receives the inputs from the outside world through the medium of the organs of perception; these inputs are then monitored by the mind-intellect complex; the brief results of analysis done by the mind-intellect are then passed on to the Atma for its final orders or guidance. [It is like any government organization wherein the chief officer does not deal with routine paper work, which is handled by the lower division clerks, but the file is finally put before him for clearance. The Atma is that chief officer, while the mind is the office clerk and the intellect is the divisional supervisor. The Atma depends upon the feedback of the mind-intellect. If the mind-intellect is already tainted by Vasanas, the Atma would be biased in its decisions. That is why the Atma should not be blamed for the Vasanas that are inherent in a creature. If the wise intellect gets rid of the Vasanas just like a good advisor of a king or the chief officer, the latter would be able to take better decisions.] So the Atma, under the influence of the mind-intellect already tainted by Vasanas, also appears to be influenced by the Vasanas; it appears to posses the Vasanas because the truthful identity of the creature is the Atma and not the mind-intellect or the gross body. So when the creature does anything under the influence of these Vasanas, it obviously seems that it is the Atma that is under the shadow of the Vasanas.

Since the Vasanas are very potent and strong, the Chitta just cannot free itself from their effects; it just cannot shed off its veil representing the various Vasanas. If it manages to free itself form one Vasana, it gets trapped by some other.

Even as an intoxicated man loses sense of what he is doing, the mind-intellect also becomes so deluded by the various Vasanas that it loses all sense of propriety and judgment. It falls into the trap of misconceptions and gets misguided (58-60).

[Note—As we have seen, the Atma has minimal role to play in this setup. However, when the mind, which is saturated with Vasanas like the sponge is in water, interferes with the analysis of the input, the results of the output are also influenced by the Vasanas. When the Vasanas are completely exhausted, the inputs are under direct control of the intellect, which in turn is in direct control, contact and command of the Atma/soul of the creature. Hence, in such a situation, the Atma is able to direct the actions through the medium of the intellect and control the actions of the creature. Since the Atma is pure, the instruction that it issues are also pure and it leads to righteous actions of the creature. The former type of perceptions by the Atma is called 'Moha' (delusions; here the word means biased, distorted and untrue view of the world), while the situation when the Atma is free of all delusions created by the Vasanas is akin to 'Gyan'. The situation is also like an intoxicated man— though he sees everything around him but his views and perceptions become distorted and out of context]

"verse no. 61 = Again, Vasanas are of two types—(i) uncorrupt and pure, and (ii) corrupt and impure. The latter throws the creature into the whirlpool of birth and death while the former liberates and helps in its deliverance from it (61).

"verse no. 68 = Those who are tied to various Vasanas (i.e. are yoked to various worldly desires, yearnings, inclinations and attachments) are deemed to be shackled, while those who have destroyed or overcome their Vasanas are deemed to be liberated and delivered. Hence, even the desire to get liberation and deliverance from this world, even the wish for attaining emancipation and salvation should also be abandoned because they are also a form of Vasana. [This is because any form of desire is Vasana; this form of Vasana to get emancipation and salvation is the good type of Vasana, but it is Vasana nevertheless.] (68)."

The Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse nos. 29-31, Canto 4, and Canto 5, verse nos. 15-18, 37-40, 48, 62 describe the concept of Vasana in detail, how to overcome it, and the spiritual rewards of doing so.

Canto 1, verse nos. 29-31 describe the effect of the Vasanas as follows—

"verse no. 29 = A person who can remain calm and steady by controlling his Vasanas (i.e. the inherent passions, yearnings, desires and wishes that are so characteristic of all living beings; worldly attachments and attractions) is the one who can keep his mind and heart steady and focused on his spiritual goal. Such a man is said to be steady and unwavering in his spiritual pursuit.

When an aspirant reaches this exalted state of existence when he is not disturbed by the constant interference of the various Vasanas, he can experience the bliss and peace that are only available when this state is reached. He is deemed to be in the state of Samadhi or a trance-like state marked with indifference to the gross existence consisting of the material world and the gross body, a state of complete peace and tranquility that bestows rest and bliss to the aspirant. Since true peace and bliss is available only when one gets rid of the Vasanas and obtains the state of Samadhi, it also called the 'Kaivalya state of existence' (because the word 'Kaivalya' literally means one of its only kind).

[This is very obvious—when a man is being subjected to constant nagging demands of the sense organs of the body as well as the heart and the mind, he can never ever hope to find peace. He would be constantly striving to fulfill their never-ending requests and expectations. It is only when he shuns them or shuts off the door to them that he can 'sleep or rest in peace'. This phrase 'sleep and rest in peace' is a metaphor for his state of Turiya and Samadhi because he is unaware of anything pertaining to the external physical world made aware of by the medium of the sense organs of the gross body, as well as the subtle world of the sub-conscious mind that exists in his dreams. When this overwhelming calmness prevails, when there is nothing to disturb the Atma, the latter finds true rest and peace. Since true rest and peace and their accompanying sense of bliss and happiness is available only when this eclectic state is reached, it is defined as the 'Kaivalya' state—or the state that is unique and unmatched. This existential state bestows him with extreme bliss and peace; he feels full of beatitude and felicity; he is

steady, unruffled and unmoving; he is unaffected by anything in this world; he is totally indifferent and neutral to everything, being merely a witness to all. He exists in his truthful state of enlightened 'self', and it is tantamount to his being in the Turiya or Samadhi state of enlightened existence.] (29).

"verse no. 30 = Therefore, I pray and hope that you are blessed with the state of the mind when it is free from any kind of Vasanas—either those that are related to the gross body (such as the desire for the gratification of its sense organs) or those that are related to the external world and its material sense objects (such as the desire to obtain them, hoard them, enjoy them and be attached to them). Let your mind become neutral and non-involved in any of the Vasanas and their attendant ills; let your mind think that it does not do anything, that it is a non-doer of deeds that are done in the wake of instigation made by the Vasanas (30).

"verse no. 31 = The Vasanas inherent in the creature are like a dark cloud that envelops the Chitta (mind, the intellect, the sub-conscious) from all sides. They are the cause of all the problems and miseries of the creature; they give the creature all sorts of torments and troubles. Hence, a wise man should endeavour to decimate or at least weaken the Vasanas gradually with the final aim of eliminating them (31).

Canto 4, verse no. 46 describes what Vasana is as follows—Be firm in your convictions and beliefs, and abandon procrastination. Do not worry about the past as well as the future. [And therefore, live in the present. Of course, this is the best antidote to worries and fears.]

Vasanas have been defined as having a desire to accept or grasp material sense objects of this world; as having yearnings, lust, greed and passions for material things and sensual objects of the world; as having a desire for gratification of the sense organs of the body (46).

(**6) (a) The Three Gunas:-** The three characteristic qualities inherently present in the creature, in different ratios, are the three thought textures which bombard the mind. These three thought textures are manifestations of the 'Vrittis and Vasanas' (inherent tendencies or desires) of the creature which mire its pure conscious Atma or soul as a covering or veil. These three basic qualities or Gunas which are inherent in all the living beings determine their nature, habits, temperaments and inclinations which in turn decide the behaviour, personality and outlook of each individual in this world.

The character of all the living beings in the entire creation is dependent upon three primary qualities called the Gunas. They are Sata, Raja and Tama. (a) 'Sata Guna' is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature, (b) 'Raja Guna' pertains to worldly passions, desires and ambition etc., while (c) 'Tam Guna' is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities leading to various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc.

(a) The Sata Guna is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of Sata Guna are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and

piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This Sata Guna is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who posses it and practice it.

The Vasanas that have the Sata Guna or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the Raja Guna and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The Raja Guna is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The Vasanas that have the Rajsic Guna or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality.

(c) The third quality is called the Tama Guna and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of Tama Guna has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence,

dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

The Vasanas that have the Tama Guna in dominance are regarded as the 'bad Vasanas' or better still the 'worst type of Vasana' that any individual can have.

The varying quantity and intensity of these three in any given individual would decide his specific character and how he is inclined to deal with the world and a given circumstance. The various permutations and combinations of these three qualities create a particular nature of an individual, giving him his individuality and his special personality which are unique to him; they determine his temperament, behaviour, thought process, et al. Two individuals having the same external form of the gross body might look very much alike but they vary immensely in their nature, habit, temperaments, inclinations, behaviour, thinking, outlook, the way they act and do their deeds, the way they tackle the problems of life, the level of their wisdom and intelligence, their personality and their general way of living.

This is also the reason why it is believed that a creature has to roam in 84 Lakh wombs or forms of life; it is only a metaphor—it does not mean an actual and countable specific number of births that the creatures have to take, but only symbolise the huge possibilities of individual characteristics that are determined by the differing ratios of these three Gunas, and the immense number of individuals that exhibit these characteristics in this creation. It only symbolically refers to the huge possibilities that are possible with these three 'Gunas' and their different combinations that can imaginably produce a myriad variety of creation that can be created with these three basic qualities and their various sub classes of qualities.

Satvic tendencies are the best tendencies amongst the three. They are positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, passions, selfishness, obsession, expansion etc. The Tamsic tendencies are the worst types leading to vices, perversion, delusions, deception, gloom, anger, ignorance et. al.

The Satvic quality or Guna is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satvic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

The Rajsic quality or Guna can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with Satwic quality. Rajsic tendencies are the second best quality which produces worldly desires, ambitions, passions, selfishness, various obsessions, desire to sustain and expand etc.

The Tamsic quality or Guna covering the soul is like a foetus in the womb covered by the embryonic membrane—they cannot be removed easily and require diligence, effort, dedicated and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, the worst type to posses, and is marked by such negative traits as sin,

evil, perversions, immorality, vices, misdemeanors, anger, inertia, delusions, deception, gloom, ignorance et al.

The three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajsic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajsic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. These Gunas have direct bearing on the personality of a man.

In modern world we can liken them to the 'gene' that is special to an individual, the 'gene' which makes each individual so unique in this creation. These Gunas can also be compared to the various shades and hues of colours that a painter uses to paint a picture or a portrait and inject life and uniqueness to it. Even the same painter cannot duplicate exactly a picture again—there is bound to be a difference between any two pictures or portraits no matter how invisible, imperceptible, microscopic and subtle it might be.

The first quality of Sattva is concerned with creation and enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. For this, one has to remain alert and vigilant like Brahma. The 'Jagrat state' also corresponds to that state when the creature is awake and interacts physically with the external world, imbibes whatever knowledge and information that comes to it, gains experience, and physically reacts to that knowledge and information. Further, such people are regarded as seniors in society, and they are best depicted in the form of the old patriarch Brahma the creator. They are awake to the harsh realities of existence and remain so engrossed in the world that they forget who they actually are, what their true identity is, and the very basic fact that what they are thinking to be real is actually not.

Next comes the 'Swapna state' in which a man dreams, and it is a metaphor for imagination and visualization of things based on the experience and knowledge gained during the Jagrat state. In this state a man lives and does things in a virtual manner in a

virtual world of dreams. He sustains and nourishes his imaginations, fantasies and conceptions in a world of dreams which is far away from the harsh realities of life in the physical world. He suffers and enjoys in his dreams, then when he wakes up, he sometimes forgets what that imaginary world was like, but at other times there have been incidents wherein he has got new insight and new inspiration while he was dreaming. This is how Vishnu sustains and nourishes the creation created by Brahma. For all practical purposes, a dreaming man appears to be in a state resembling the state of Samadhi, or a state when an aspirant is in deep meditation and engrossed in contemplation, because he remains aloof and oblivious to the external world, and remains absolutely motionless. But this state is temporary, because he would revert back or wake up to the Jagrat state. That is why Lord Vishnu, who represents this quality of Raja, is depicted as perpetually reclining contemplatively on the bed of the coiled legendary serpent floating on the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar. Since without a vision and imagination one cannot grow, develop and rise, Vishnu is regarded as a maverick player of fantastic tricks in order to sustain and enhance his interests of looking after the creation. Out of these Trinity Gods, it is Vishnu who assumes so many forms and adopts so many tricks to do the needful.

The third quality of Tama is represented by Shiva because this God of the Trinity has been designated with the function of bringing to an end what has been created by Brahma and sustained by Vishnu. But this is not to demean Shiva because there are a number of Upanishads in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which expressely state that Shiva is the Supreme Being or Brahm personified, or that there is no difference between any of these three Gods of the Trinity. For practical reasons however, Shiva is depicted as showing certain traits which are so typical of this quality of Tama—viz. being short tempered, and destroying at the shortest notice; his external behaviour and attire also represents the excess of this lowest quality in him. The Sushupta state that he represents stands for being totally oblivious of the external world, and remaining in total bliss. This is exactly how Shiva has been depicted—he remains in a perpetual state of meditation, completely indifferent to the external world, unconcerned and detached from the attractions of the enchanting outside when he can find complete bliss inside his own bosom. The Tama quality marks the presence of ignorance in a greater ratio, and this is depicted by Shiva when he remains ignorant of the niceties of worldly behaviour, notwithstanding his exalted stature of being the greatest amongst the Gods.

The effects of the Gunas and how they affect this creation have been explained in a number of Upanishads.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 2 of the Atharva Veda says—"The Lord himself is the one who is the cause of the creation coming into existence; he is the one who sustains and protects it; he is the one who finally concludes it. Towards this end, he willingly utilises the three basic qualities called the Gunas that act as catalysts to give effect to the Lord's wishes. These three Gunas help to bring about a particular change in creation, and

modify the existing equilibrium in accordance with the wishes of the Lord.

These three Gunas are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The dominance of the first quality called Sata Guna results in the emergence or retrieval of this present creation from the darkness that had prevailed after the previous phase of creation was annihilated. The dominance of the second quality called Raja Guna is responsible for the growth, the development, the sustenance and protection of creation that has come into existence. And finally, the third quality of Tama Guna brings about the conclusion of the existing creation.

Just like a huge banyan tree is secretly and imperceptibly present in its seed, only to emerge when the situation is conducive for its birth, this entire creation is secretly present in the supreme Lord and waiting for the right conditions that would cause it to emerge into a vibrant world. [And this 'right condition' is created when the Sata Guna becomes a dominant factor.] (2)."

It ought to be noted here that all these three Gunas are always present in this world, but in varying degrees. Under normal conditions equilibrium is maintained, but when certain Guna becomes more active or dominant this equilibrium is disturbed, and this result in a change becoming possible. The three Gunas play the role of a catalyst in effecting this change. Even as a computer can only function on the basis of its configuration and soft-wares installed into it, the creature was conditioned to act according to the ratio of these three Gunas built into his thought texture and personality traits. In the present case, when the creation was harboured in the bosom of the supreme Brahm, a quiet balance was in place. When the Lord decided to see the creation come into existence once again after a long hibernation period after its conclusion at the end of the last phase of creation, his mere wish ignited the Sata Guna to become active and charged, and this stirred up the cosmic ocean of quietude which resulted in the first ripples of creation. This has been envisioned by ancient sages and seers as the stirring of the primordial cosmic ether or the cosmic gel that created subtle waves of energy that coalesced with one another and overlapped each other to become energized and gather strength. This produced the primordial sound that has been conceptualized in the form of the Mantra OM. And from this initial whirring and humming came into being the rest of the elements as the primordial cosmic gel began to show signs of losing its homogeneity and becoming more and more heterogeneous.

As the cosmic cauldron began to cool down and the various constituent layers of creation began taking shape, the Sata Guna, being the best and the most sublime of the three Gunas, floated to the surface like butter does in milk. The Tama Guna, being the grossest of the three Gunas, was the heaviest, the meanest and the densest, and therefore it settled at the bottom. Meanwhile, the Raja Guna, being of an intermediary character, occupied the place between the two. There was no fine and well-defined demarcation line between them, and the demarcation was more of being relative in nature. Hence, there were areas where the three intermingled equally, while at others one Guna dominated over the other two.

The Tama Guna, being crude, acidic and corrosive by nature, eroded the part of the creation where it dominated, explaining why the creation ends when this particular Guna becomes

dominant. This also explains why the creature in whom the Tama Guna is a ruling character soon lands in grave spiritual trouble. But since the Sata Guna has a natural quality to look up and regenerate, this creation re-emerges from its ruins when the Sata Guna takes over the Tama Guna in a new phase of creation. The Raja Guna helps the nascent creation expand and develop to its full potentials under its patronage. It provides the necessary warmth, energy, stamina and dynamism necessary for growth and development. When the peak is reached, then like the sine wave the downward slide begins, reaches the bottom, and then picks up momentum once again to resurface as a new creation. This is briefly how the cycle continues and the wave of life oscillates infinitely.

The entire process of creation that followed has been explained in various Upanishads in varying languages, but basically all of them assert that Brahm had utilized these three Gunas to effect a change in the prevailing situation as and when the Lord deemed it fit and proper to do so.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 3, verse no. 1 says that all the three Gunas depend upon the level of one's Vidya or his level of wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 6, paragraph no. 7 beautifully describes the relation of these three Gunas vis-à-vis this creation. Let us quote this verse and see what it says—"7. Those other Brahmaands have four mouths, five mouths, six mouths, seven mouths, eight mouths—in this sequence they extend to thousands of Brahmaands with thousands of mouths. [The number of mouths of different worlds extending to thousands of mouths is simply a metaphor to indicate the stupendous number and variety of these worlds. It also might mean creatures ranging from the single celled organisms such as the algae and the amoeba, to the most complex living beings such as the human race.]

All of them are tiny fractions of Lord Narayan's cosmic body. [Refer Canto 2, paragraph no. 11; Canto 6, paragraph no. 8.]

Each one of them has been created by a separate Brahma (the creator) who has the Raja Guna as the dominant virtue in him and who is only a fraction of the Supreme Being. [The Raja Guna is the inherent quality that motivates Brahma to create the material world around him. Brahma stands for the creative dynamism of Brahm. The Raja Guna is the quality in one's character that motivates one to get involved in activities of the world.]

Similarly, each world has its own Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector) with a dominance of Sata Guna, and its own Lord Maheshwar (i.e. Lord Shiva) who is the concluder with a dominance of Tama Guna. Both of these Gods are but a fraction of the vast and all-encompassing Supreme Being called Brahm.

[The Sata Guna is the best of the three qualities and motivates the one who has it to be gracious, compassionate and merciful towards all; it kindles a tendency to give succour and solace to others. Hence, Lord Vishnu possesses this quality as a dominant virtue in him, and this is why he is a merciful Lord who is entrusted with the task of taking care of the world. Vishnu personifies the ability of the Supreme Being to sustain, nourish and protect this creation.

Similarly, Lord Shiva has the Tama Guna in a dominant ratio as this quality is motivates one to be short-tempered, angry and intolerant. This is why Shiva possesses these qualities which are however necessary for him to conclude this creation without showing any regrets. Hence, Shiva personifies the ability of Brahm to conclude this creation when the Lord so decides.

The implication of this stanza is that the creation—no matter at what level it exists at a given point of time—has three basic Gunas or qualities in it in different and varying proportions. These three Gunas together form a 'triangle', a geometrical depiction of creation. This is why the creation is called 'Trigun-Mayi'—one that has three Gunas, one that is completely dependent on and characteristised by presence of the three Gunas. In this symbolic triangle representing this creation, even if one of the corners representing one Guna is removed, the triangle ceases to exist—i.e. the creation ceases to exist. That simply translates into a incontrovertible fact that if we must have an entity known as a 'creation', then we must have all the three Gunas in place.]

All these Brahmaands or Universes are like numerous fish and bubbles of water that endlessly swirl around in the cosmic ocean of infinite dimensions and depth (7)."

The *Devi Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 18 says that the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama are manifestations of the cosmic Mother Goddess. The 'Mother Goddess' is actually a revelation of the dynamic powers, authority, strength and potentials of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess represents the dynamism of Brahm that is employed by the latter to create, develop, sustain, nourish, control and protect this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level. Since these three Gunas determine and control the nature, temperament, behaviour, habits and personality of all living beings, it follows that they are simply manifestations of the dynamic Gunas of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which are personified as the cosmic Goddess.

The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially Maitrayanyu Upanishad, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition. Nearly all the Upanishads expound on the subject, and the chief amongst them, besides the above, are the *Chandogya* and *Brihad Aranyaka* Upanishads.

To understand how the three Gunas affect the Atma, let's take two examples—that of a hot piece of iron glowing red with heat, and the potter moulding various pots from the same clod of earth.

The supreme pure conscious cosmic Atma subjects the Bhoot Atma of the individual creature to the 'radiation' of these 'Gunas'. These 'Gunas' are the three basic qualities present in all the creatures in different permutations and combinations. These 'Gunas' effect the 'Bhoot Atma' differently based on a number of factors—such as for example, the present status of the 'Bhoot Atma' vis-à-vis its past deeds, their cumulative affects, the caliber of its mind and intellect, the position it occupies in the ladder of spiritual evolution, its willingness to change or subject itself to the effects of such radiation etc.

The concept can be understood differently also. A piece of iron, when heated, shows the heat as a 'red hot glow' which fully pervades the iron piece and becomes an

integral part of it. The whole piece appears to be one whole mass of something which is red, hot and glowing. When beaten by a hammer, the iron piece bends and can be shaped into any shape. Each new shape, when heated, will show the same glow of red hot fire inside it. Similarly, the Atma provides consciousness to the creature, making it active and lively, subject to receptions of stimuli in the form of various perceptions originating in the external world and received through the organs of perception present in the gross body. The 'heated' body (i.e. the Bhoot Atma made active by the Atma) now becomes susceptible to change (from the impact of the three Gunas) much like the heated piece of iron being hammered by the hammer. The 'hammering' by the three 'Gunas' (the inherent qualities present in every creature) help to cast the individual creature into various moulds or shapes having different characteristics. Even as cold iron is not easily malleable, the creature without the infusion of life injected into it by the Atma is as good as dead and is the least malleable. Here, the allegory is simple —the creature is the iron, the glowing consciousness is the fire, the impinging 'Gunas' is the blow of the hammer, and the Atma is the iron smith.

The wheel of the potter moulds the clay into various shapes, but the driving force of the wheel is the potter. Similarly, the three 'Gunas' mould the characteristic of the creature, but the Atma is the authority, the potter in this allegory, who drives the three 'Gunas'. Just as the potter is not the wheel, the Atma is not affected by the three 'Gunas', it is just an instrument, an implement to shape the character of the creature. Again, even as a wheel is needed by a potter to give shape to a shapeless clod of clay, the Atma needs the three Gunas to mould the characters of the creatures that constitute this creation.

An important point to note here is that 'Ahankar' (ego, false pride, arrogance, haughtiness, hypocrisy and the sense of 'I') is the root cause of demoting even the most exalted of souls to an existence equivalent to that of an animal. This is stressed in Jabalu-panishad of Sam Veda tradition which stresses that 'Isha' or the supreme Lord of creation had to become a 'Pashupati', Lord of animals, just because Ahankar cast its dark shadow on him. An exalted soul too becomes demoted as an animal if he has Ahankar in him.

The concept that 'I', or the person's true identity, is the gross body and not the 'pure conscious soul' leads to ignorance-based ego and a sense of false pride called Ahanakar. When the creature is constantly under the deluding concept of 'I' being the gross body which interacts with this world, it inculcates a sense of possessiveness about the materialistic world in the creature. 'Pure consciousness' mired by ego becomes 'a conditioned consciousness' and fails to remain pure.

This is why ego and pride, called Ahankar, has been likened to a minister of the king; it directs and regulates the actions of the consciousness which, under its influence, loses its independence much like the king who depends upon his ministers for all his major decisions because it is the minister who advises and gives the basic feed back to the king to enable him to make a decision.

This 'conditioned consciousness'—working through the mind-intellect-ego combine is called, inter-alia, 'Chitta' or sub-conscious mind. The word also means 'attention and memory'.

Hence, this memory acts as a referral library for the intellect. The latter falls back on it and rely on it whenever it is in doubt. The quality of books in the library guides the student; similarly, the quality of inherent tendencies stored in the library of Chitta directly affects the inputs of the intellect, and through it, the mind and successively down the hierarchy to the body and its organs of perception and action.

Although the soul has nothing to do with this command chain, but for all practical purposes the Atma/soul, which is the true identity of a creature and pure consciousness, is deemed responsible for everything because of its sovereign nature even as a king is held responsible for all that happens in his kingdom, and he just cannot absolve himself of any and all misdeeds done by any of his subjects and subordinates on the plea that they personally should be held responsible for their actions; it is the duty of a righteous king to ensure that everything goes on right in his kingdom.

So, the sincere seeker/aspirant should delineate this conscious from the rest of the chain and break the nexus between them so as to allow the glory of the pure consciousness of the soul to shine through like the splendorous sun breaking through from behind a curtain of clouds. It is like removing the various veils or covers from around the candle so that its light shines through the darkness of the room and illuminates all the corners of it.

The Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse no. 2 describes how the three Gunas were used by the supreme Creator to create this world. To quote—

"verse no. 2 = The Lord himself is the one who is the cause of the creation coming into existence; he is the one who sustains and protects it, and finally concludes it. Towards this end, he willingly utilises the three basic qualities called the Gunas that act as catalysts to give effect to the Lord's wishes. These three Gunas help to bring about a particular change in creation, and modify the existing equilibrium in accordance with the wishes of the Lord.

These three Gunas are the following—Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna. The dominance of the first quality called Sata Guna results in the emergence or retrieval of this present creation from the darkness that had prevailed after the previous phase of creation was annihilated. The dominance of the second quality called Raja Guna is responsible for the sustenance and development of creation and its protection. And finally, the third quality of Tama Guna brings about the conclusion of the existing creation.

Just like a huge banyan tree is secretly and imperceptibly present in its seed, only to emerge when the situation is conducive for its birth, this entire creation is secretly present in the supreme Lord and waiting for the right conditions that would cause it to emerge into a vibrant world. [And this 'right condition' is created when the Sata Guna becomes a dominant factor.] (2)."

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 describes the relationship between Prakriti, Maya and Gunas in a very succinct manner as follows—"Prakriti (primary Nature) should be treated as the Maya, and the supreme Lord called Maheshwar (one who is 'Maha'—great, and 'Ishwar'—Lord, of everything) as the

maverick Lord who inspires and enables the Maya to not only create this world but also imprint it with its own characteristic qualities (much like the offspring bearing the characters and features, or genes, of the parent).

Thus, the entire creation bears the characteristic qualities and virtues so typical of and unique to Maya; these qualities and virtues form an integral character and nature of this creation as a whole as well as of all its individual units. [They are called the various Gunas.] (10)."

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 16, describes how the supreme Brahm was the creator of all the three Gunas. To quote—"That Supreme Being is the creator of the entire creation and the principal factor at the center or core of its being in existence[1].

He is omniscient and all-knowing (refer verse no. 17 below amongst others). He is self created (in the sense that there is no cause of his coming into being, because, for one, he is eternal and infinite, and for second, he is imperishable; so the question of 'taking a fresh birth' like other entities of creation does not arise). [Refer verse no. 7 of this Canto amongst others.]

He is the supreme Authority that inspires and regulates Kaal, and is also the cause of its coming to an end (death)[2]. He is a treasury of all the three Gunas (i.e. all the qualities, virtues and attributes that determine the personality, character, temperaments, nature and habits of a creature have been created by him)[3]. Being omniscient and all-knowing, he is also the treasure of all Vidya or knowledge.

Brahm is the 'supreme' Lord who is the ultimate 'Chief Authority' in creation, and senior to both the Viraat Purush (the macrocosmic gross body of creation from whom the rest of the visible and invisible world came into existence) as well as Prakriti (Nature; the so-called 'female' aspect of creation which was responsible for its coming into being in association with its cosmic male counterpart, the Viraat Purush, and for nurturing the cosmos in its womb as the cosmic embryo)[4].

He determines the quantum, intensity, density and proportion of the basic ingredients that are required to classify the motley collection of all the basic character traits that appeared at the time of creation into the three fundamental classes of qualities and character determining attributes that eventually came to be known as the 'three basic Gunas of creation' that are inherently present in all the living beings in this creation. [These three Gunas are briefly the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna.]

He is the supreme regulator who controls the wheel of creation (called the Brahm Chakra—refer Canto 1, verse no. 4, 6) from start to finish. Therefore, he is the one who determines, regulates and controls whether or not the creature finds Moksha, whether it remains in shackles or gets liberation and deliverance from this deluding and artificial world of miseries and pains[5]. It is he who maintains a fine balance and equilibrium between any two extremes of creation so that the latter remains balanced and existing in a perpetual manner (16).

[Note—[1]This creation has an existence because the Supreme Being is present at the helm of affairs. Just like the wheel rotates around a central axis, and if this axis is removed the wheel would fall apart and cease to be of any relevance, this entire creation

revolves around this central Authority known as Brahm which not only keeps every unit in its specific place but also empowers it to carry on with its designated functions, while at the same time keeping a strict tab on its functioning. He is like the Sun around which the planets not only revolve but owe their place and location in the cosmic theatre for it is the gravitational pull of the Sun which keeps the planets in their fixed position in the sky for otherwise they would have spun out of control and ran off randomly to create uncontrolled and unstoppable chaos in the cosmos, colliding with each other and with other entities just like a ball thrown haphazardly in a sports utility shop would cause havoc in it. Besides this regulatory function, it is the Sun which provides light, heat, energy and vitality—the metaphors for 'life'—to this world, it is the Sun that controls the seasons and the rainfall, it is the Sun that is responsible for photosynthesis in plants which help to provide the basic food to all the living organisms. Therefore, it is unimaginable to have life without the Sun.

In the context of this verse and the philosophy of the Upanishads in general, Brahm is like the illuminated celestial Sun residing in the sky, and the latter is regarded as the most visible, most powerful and most potent form of Brahm. This Brahm resides in the subtle sky of the heart of the living being as his Atma or pure consciousness. It is this Atma around which all life rotates; as soon as this Atma leaves the body, all its value and worth cease to exist. In fact, life itself would cease to mean anything without consciousness. Who would like to deal with a man who is lying un-conscious as if he is dead though he might be legally and clinically alive? Refer verse nos. 4/14, 5/5, 6/9 etc.

[2]Kaal broadly refers to the factors of time, age, period and circumstance in this creation. The word also refers to the God of death. Therefore, this stanza means that Brahm is that overriding Authority which has set the agenda for the forces of Nature defined as time, age, period and circumstance to work strictly according to set rules, and then oversees that they are obeying their mandate. In the context of these forces of Nature being deified as a God called Kaal who has been delegated the powers to regulate the function of death and fate of the creature after death, it is affirmed here that this seemingly eternal and imperishable God—eternal and infinite because he outlasts every creature's life and is present in all the future lives of this creature to decide his future fate based on all records of the creature's past lives, and therefore apparently seems never to die—would also have to die one day. When? The probable answer is 'after the last creature has died at the end of creation', as there would then be no need of this Kaal for Brahm because there would be no creature left to regulate. Brahm has delegated his authority to regulate the creation to so many Gods, and Kaal is one such subordinate to Brahm. So when he is not needed, he would also go the same way as the other Gods, i.e. he would cease to exist.

According to *Adhyatma Ramayan* of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kanda, canto 8, verse no.21-25, Kaal is the eldest son of Vishnu incarnated as Sri Ram. The Lord's union with Maya created Kaal first, hence he is deemed to be the first entity created in this creation. It implies that before anything is born, its end is made a certainty. To quote—"Kaal, disguised as a sage or hermit said to Sri Ram, 'Listen Sri Ram! Listen to the fact as it is (20-21). Oh Lord God! Brahma has sent me to you. Oh Lord, the conqueror of enemies!

I am your elder son (22).

Oh the brave one! I was born by your union with Maya (your delusory and cosmic creative powers). I am the destroyer of all, and renowned by the name of Kaal. Lord Brahma—who is worshipped by all the celestial sages, ascetics and hermits (23)—has sent the message to you that your time has come, oh the wise one, to give your protection to the heavens. In some previous time, it was only you who had lived/survived after getting annihilated the rest of the creation (24). Then, by your union with your divine consort named Maya, you had produced me (Kaal) first (as your elder son), followed by the hooded serpent called 'Seshnath Anant' who reclines upon the water (of the legendary Kshir Sagar, the celestial ocean of milk) (25)".

[3]All the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama originate from him as he is the creator of the entire creation, and these three qualities are the fundamental factors which decided the seminal qualities and characters, the nature and temperament displayed by each individual creature depending upon the proportion of these Gunas that it possessed.

[4]This conception is in consonant with the evolution of creation according to the Sankhya philosophy as described in detail in note to verse no. 13 above. The 'supreme Lord' referred to here is Brahm, the Supreme Being from whom the cosmic egg called Hiranyagarbha was born. It was Brahm who inspired both the Viraat Purush as well as the Prakriti to initiate the process of creation by establishing an alliance between the two. In other words, he is the supreme inspirer and motivator as expressly stressed in verse no. 1-3 of this Canto. Entire Canto 1 of Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated to this basic idea that Brahm is the Principal Authority who is responsible for the emergence of this creation.

[5]Since the supreme Lord is the inspirer of all the creatures, it is he who determines whether a creature is a worthy candidate for being selected as a student researching for Truth depending upon the creature's past deeds and its present sincerity and spiritual inclinations. It is just like a college principal deciding whether or not to give a candidate admission to his college, keeping in mind the reputation of the institution as well as the ability of the candidate to successfully imbibe the culture of the college along with formal education, and whether the chances of him excelling in his field of study are bright or not because the reputation of any college or university also depends on its Alma Mater.

Once given admission, it is up to the student to live up to the principal's expectations, for simply succeeding in getting admission in a top notch college means nothing if the student has no aptitude and skills, or he becomes careless in his studies and consequentially fails in his exams. Similarly, the supreme Brahm initiates a sincere aspirant into spiritualism by 'inspiring him' and creating circumstances conducive to his spiritual progress, which we shall call 'chance' meeting with a self-realised and competent moral preceptor or guide who would show the aspirant the right path that leads to unfolding the Truth for him. It would be often be noted that there are certain people who have a natural affinity for things spiritual and an equal disdain for things pertaining to this material world. Such people can be regarded as being the fortunate ones who are selected by the Supreme Being to tread on the path he has determined for them. On the other hand there are

people who won't do so even if prodded and repeatedly told of the horrific consequences for remaining engrossed in this material world of sensual gratification. They would suffer but would not realise the truth.]

How the three Gunas affect the man's character have been very precisely and expressly narrated in *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 7-13. let us see what these verses have to say—

"Verse no. 7 = There are said to be three inherent qualities or Gunas that determine the basic character and fundamental nature of all living beings. These three are Sata, Raja and Tama (7).

"Verse no. 8-9 = The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the first Guna, the Sata, in predominance—Ahinsa (non-violence, non-killing or non-harming in any way, physical and mental), Satya (truthfulness in all its broad connotations, including such noble traits as trustworthiness and honesty), Asteya (non-theft, non-stealing, non-deceit, non-subterfuge, non-sleight and non-slyness), Brahmacharya (celibacy, continence, abstinence, self-restraint, self-control of the organs and the self), Aparagriha (renunciation and detachment, non-hoarding, giving away of superfluous and excessive wealth to those who are needy, making of liberal charities and donations, giving of alms), abandonment of Krodh (forsaking anger, indignation and wrathfulness), serving one's Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), Shuchitaa (cleanliness and purity in all their broad connotations involving the mind, intellect and body), Santosh (contentedness, satisfaction and feeling fulfilled with whatever that is available, without yearning for more endlessly and feeling restless and greedy), Amaanitaa (lack of pride, ego, haughtiness and arrogance; having humility, piety and simplicity), not to have Dambha (i.e. not to have the negative trait of excessive show of self pride and arrogance; not to be a hypocrite; not to be a bragger, boastful and loud mouthed man, not to be deceitful and be an imposter), to have Aastiktaa (i.e. to have firm faith, unwavering conviction and steady belief in the Truth enshrined in ancient wisdom and the tenets of the scriptures; to have unfaltering faith in one's self and one's auspicious goals in life), and to abhor violence of all kind etc. (8-9).

"Verse no. 10 =The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the second Guna, the Raja, in predominance—to have the notion of being a doer of things, to feel that being the doer of deeds one has the right to enjoy their consequent rewards as fruits of one's labour, to feel that one is the speaker and orator (i.e. one is a wise and scholarly man who is well versed with letters and everyone is eager to hear his wise council of a variety of subjects). In short, to be proud of one's achievements and successes in this world comes under the purview of Raja Guna (10).

"Verse no. 11 = The following are described as the characteristic traits of those people who have the third Guna, the Tama, in predominance—Nidra (sleep, drowsiness), Aalasya (laziness, lethargy, indolence), Moha (worldly attractions, delusions and their attendant hallucinations), Aasakti (to be greatly infatuated with and mentally and emotionally so intensely attached to the things of this material world that one's whole being is overtaken by its thoughts),

Maithun (to have a conjugal relationship; to establish a union which does not necessarily mean sexual union, but being infatuated with the sense objects of the world and yearning for sensual gratification, to allow the mind and intellect to continuously think of nothing else but that object is tantamount to being in constant physical contact with it or having sex with it), and Chauray (to do things stealthily, to be sly, deceitful, have underhand dealings, the trait of sleight and subterfuge, to steal something not rightly belonging to one's self etc.) (11).

"Verse no. 12 =The Sata Guna is regarded as the best quality, the Raja of a medium quality, and Tama as being of the lowest quality (12).

"Verse no. 13 = The knowledge of the eclectic non-dual eternal Truth (i.e. of the supreme transcendental Brahm) is regarded as Satwic Gyan (or the best and the excellent form of knowledge and enlightenment which paves the way for a man's self-realisation and his ultimate liberation and deliverance from this world of birth and death). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called 'Satya Gyan' or knowledge of the Truth.

The knowledge pertaining to Dharma (i.e. that knowledge which enlightens the man about what are considered as noble, righteous and auspicious deeds in this world) come under the category of Rajsic Gyan (because such knowledge would automatically and naturally inspire him to get involved in doing good deeds and then hoping to enjoy the auspicious rewards of such deeds, thereby getting entangled in this world). This aspect of knowledge and erudition is called 'Dharma Gyan' or knowledge of Dharma.

But that knowledge that is covered by a veil of darkness signifying ignorance, stupidity and delusions, leading to all sorts of misconceptions and illusions about the truth and reality, the darkness in which phantoms and ghosts are seen, comes under the category of 'Tama Gyan', or the knowledge dominated by darkness (13)."

How the three Gunas were used by Brahm to create this world has been beautifully described in *Paingalo-panishad*, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama. Let us see how it all happened—

"Canto 2, verse no. 3 = After that, the supreme creator collected those parts of the individual elements which had the Raja Guna (the second of the three fundamental qualities that are inherently present in the entire creation and determine its characters and specific nature) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Pran' (the vital winds). These are five in number—viz. Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan. Similarly, the sub-Prans are called Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

The main or chief Pran (breath or the life infusing vital wind) has its seat in the following sites—heart, lower buttocks (in the Muladhar Chakra which is a subtle energy centre present at the lower end of the body near the anus and genitals), navel (abdomen), throat and other parts of the body.

Thereafter, he used the remaining fourth part to create the various organs of action (mouth, hands, legs, and the excretory and procreative organs). These five organs have as their functions the following—speech (is the function of mouth), receiving (is the function of

hands), movement (is the function of legs), excretion (is the function of the excretory organs such as anus and kidneys), and enjoyments of pleasure (is the function of the sexual organs).

Similarly, he collected those parts of the individual elements which had the Sata Guna (the first of the three fundamental qualities) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Anthakaran'[1] (the inner self; the subtle body). It had the following components—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (the faculty of concentration, paying attention and memory; knowledge and sub-conscious), Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) and their attendant Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body). [That is, the basic nature of a person and the way he would react to a given circumstance, the way he would deal, behave and interact with the world, the way he would interpret things, the way he thinks, the things that would appeal to him and the things he would abhor, etc.—that is, the overall personality of the creature, all depends upon the mental setup tinged with the fundamental character traits that are firmly ingrained in him.]

These components that formed the subtle body had the following characteristic objects that they pursue—Sankalps (making vows promises, having volitions, aspirations and firm determinations etc.—this was the function of the Mana), Nishya (to have predetermined conceptions about anything or situation— this was the exclusive job of Vrittis), Smaran (to remember and recollect—this was the function of the Chitta), Abhiman (to have pride and arrogance, to be haughty and hypocrite—this was the exceptional domain of Ahankar), and Anusandhaan (research and analysis, quest and enquiry, to determine and arrive at conclusions, to debate and research, to discuss and deduce—this was the function of the Buddhi).

These entities have their seats in the throat, mouth, navel, heart and the mid-point between the two eyebrows. [It is obvious how it happens. A man uses his mouth to express his mind, his thoughts as well as to show off his ego and pride. Throat and mouth are equally important for speaking and gloating over one's acquisitions and successes. The heart is emotional, and its involvement makes a man passionate about his ideas. The navel is the center from where all the Naadis (nerves) fan out in the body, enabling the creature to remain sensitive, alert and active. The center of the eyebrow is the location of the intellect or Buddhi. This Buddhi stands for rational and intelligent thinking, as opposed to impulsive and sentimental responses of the heart. In other words, all the crucial subtle virtues that were manifestations of the Sata Guna in its various levels of subtlety had their symbolic location at these five points in the body.]

The Lord used the remaining fourth part of the 'Sata-Guna' dominant elements to create the organs of perceptions—such as the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose. The respective functions are—hearing, touching and feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling.

The following are the chief patron Gods or deities of all these organs—the presiding deities of the various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Arka (the Water God), Pracheta (one of the ancient Prajapatis, the care-takers of the creation according to the Purans), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and the medicine men of the Gods), Agni (the Fire

God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (the junior Gods who help Indra to carry on his functions), Mritu (the death God or Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Vishnu (the sustainer), the four-headed Lord (Brahma the creator), and Shiva (the concluder of creation)."

"Canto 1, verse no. 7 = When the supreme creator desired/wished to create the cosmos/universe/world, he invoked his third quality called Tama, and then under its influence he wished to establish the three subtle Tanmatras (senses of perceptions of the future organs) into the gross forms of the five primary elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky). [In other words, the primary elements which were hitherto neutral and dormant were now infused with the powers to smell, taste, create, destroy, move about, produce sound that can be heard, and spread their influence in the entire creation while occupying all available space. The result was the subtlety of the elements was undermined, and injected with the Tama aspect of Brahm, they became gross in a gradual and progressive manner.]

Each of these elements was then divided into two, and each of these divisions was then again divided into four sub-segments or sub-divisions. He then took one half fraction of each sub-division of these elements and mixed one-eighth fraction of each of the remaining elements with it. This resulted in the possibility of the creation having an infinite variety of entities which constituted the basic ingredients used to mould this stupendously vast, fascinatingly infinite and magnificently myriad creation where no two entities were alike. These variations were so unimaginably countless that literally it was 'apparently endless and infinite, apparently eternal and fathomless'. [That is, these virtues of being endless, infinite, eternal and fathomless were the epithets assigned to the creation because it was so vast and of such a stupendously great variety that it was not possible to measure it or see from where it has its beginning and where it has an end. Refer also to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4-9 and 2/1-18.]

To create a place where this new creation can be placed or rested, he established the fourteen Bhuvans[1] (the mythological abodes of the creation according to Purans). Once this basic foundation was laid, he then needed the creatures that would now inhabit and populate this creation. So he created the creatures in accordance to the environs of the respective Bhuvans. That is, though the types and number of creatures created by him were much more and many millions of times greater than the number of Bhuvans created, he assigned to them these fourteen abodes depending upon their suitability and adaptability. [After all, what was the use of creation of such a formidably vast and varied world and its inexhaustible supply of natural wealth and resources if there was no one to live in it and enjoy them? So the creator felt the need to create a 'living being' in his own image so that he can enjoy this theatre, albeit in the guise of a creature; that is why the creature is regarded as an image of the supreme Lord.]"

The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the *Maitrayanyu Upanishad*, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition.

In Tantra texts, these three *Gunas are treated as the three Granthis* or knots. The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda is one such. In its Canto 1, verse no. 116 it describes how the three inherent Gunas (qualities) of Sata, Raja and Tama that are naturally

present in all the creatures are likened to knots or Granthis that create obstacles in his spiritual progress and the shine of his consciousness to come to the fore. Verse no. 117 describes the benefits of this achievement. Now let us see what they say—

"Verse no. 116 = When the Chandra Naadi and the Surya Naadi (i.e. the Ida and Pingla Naadis corresponding to the left and right nostrils respectively) are brought in harmony, i.e. when they are equally de-clogged and breathing through both of them is done equally easily[1], the aspirant is deemed to have pierced through the three Granthis symbolising the three inherent Gunas (i.e. the three qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama) that are present in all persons[2].

Having managed to pierce through this barrier, the ascetic attains a state of existence that transcends it, i.e. that is not conditioned by any of the three Gunas. Therefore he becomes an embodiment of Lord Shiva himself; he inculcates in him all the auspicious virtues possessed by Shiva along with all the mystical powers, called the various Siddhis, that accompany success in Yoga (116).

[Note—[1]Until the time when all the three Granthis are not pierced and the vital wind has not entered the Sushumna Naadi, the person is not able to breathe freely from both the nostrils. The very fact that the passages of the two nostrils are free and allow a free way to the inhaling and exhaling exercise proves that all the toxins in the body have been eliminated and the person has reached the stage when he has successfully achieved the aim of doing Pranayam—to detoxify the body and prepare it for the ultimate goal of Yoga, which is to make one experience the inherent divinity and the shine of the pure consciousness present inside the person's own self. This shine of the conscious self and the glory of its divinity were marred by the various faults and impurities that had wrapped the person's true self in a dark veil of delusions and ignorance. The various Gunas are the paints that had virtually obscured the real colour of the soul. When they are scrapped off by means of Yoga, the original shine of the pure consciousness comes to the fore.

[2]A person who is spiritually inclined and has a clear conscience is the person who is a true Yogi (a true ascetic) and is the one who has symbolically vanquished the three Granthis representing the three Gunas. These Gunas are compared to 'knots' or Granthis because they are impediments in realisation of one's natural qualities and powers of the soul; they prevent the inborn divinity and auspicious spiritual nature of the creature to come to the fore. These Gunas act as conditioning elements, influencing the creature and its overall character. these three basic Gunas or qualities that are present in all the persons in different ratios and which decide his individual temperament, behavioural patterns, thought processes, and other character and personality traits. The best of the three is Sata which refers to noble traits of auspiciousness and righteousness; a man having a greater proportion of Sata would naturally be a holy, pious and spiritually inclined man. The second is Raja which makes him inclined towards the world and its mundane affairs; he would like to enjoy the world and the comforts provided by its material and sense objects. The last is the Tama quality which makes him pervert, sinful, of a low mental caliber, and very selfish. Such a man is said to be covered by a dark veil of delusions and ignorance.

This conditioning by the varying ratios of the three Gunas results in the creation of myriad variety of characters and temperaments in the creatures, whereas the Atma, the pure conscious soul in all living beings, is the same in all of them. This 'piercing of the three Granthis' is a symbolic way of vanquishing of these three Gunas, or being able to overcome their influences. A person who is free from their fetters is a free man. This is equivalent to his obtaining Mukti, or getting liberation and deliverance from all conditionings effects of and influences exerted by all extraneous elements which mar his own spiritual nature.]

"Verse no. 117 = This state of accomplishment in Yoga when the two divine forces of Nature are united, i.e. when the Shiva element (represented by the Chandra Naadi or the Ida Naadi) and the Shakti element (represented by the Surya Naadi or the Pingla Naadi) are united by the process of Pranayam done as matter of routine during Yoga, the ascetic experiences extreme sense of elation, ecstasy, bliss and joy which is comparable to the one experienced by a thirsty elephant who is able to drink cold water through his trunk to his heart's content (117)."

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 64 says that the forty-seven lettered Mala Mantra of Lord Ram, who was no one else but the supreme Brahm manifested in a human form, has the mystical power of destroying or eliminating the affects of the three Gunas of the Lord's devotees, thereby liberating them from the fetters of the Maya (delusions) that these Gunas create. To quote—"The final shape of the forty-seven letters 'Mala Mantra' of Lord Ram is as follows 'OM NAMO BHAGWATE RAGHU-NANDANAYE RAKSHO-GHNA-VISHDAYE MADHUR PRASANNA-VADANAAYA MIT TEJSE BALAYE RAMAYE VISHNAVE NAMAHA' (ॐ नमो भगवते रघुनन्दनाय रक्षोघ्नविशदाय मधुर प्रसन्नवदनाय मिततेजसे बलाय रामाय विळ्णवे नमः).

This Mantra pertains to Lord Ram who is crowned as the king of Ayodhya—that is, it relates to the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, when he revealed himself as the noble king of Ayodhya. Since Lord Ram had a physical body and a visible form, this Mantra therefore relates to the 'Sagun' or manifested form of the Supreme Being that has specific attributes, qualities and characteristics as opposed to the cosmic form of the Lord which is invisible, unqualified and without attributes. In other words, this Mala Mantra honours the Supreme Being known as Brahm in his incarnation as Lord Ram.

However, this Mala Mantra has great potential and possesses mystical powers to liberate the Lord's devotes from the snare created by the three Gunas (or inherent qualities which are an integral part of all living beings) that are closely associated with Maya (the worldly delusions) which binds the creature to this artificial mundane world and its material sense objects (64)."

Colours of the Gunas:--Upanishads symbolically refer to the three primary colours when they describe these three basic qualities in the creature. They are white for the Sata Guna, red for the Raja Guna, and black for the Tama Guna. Refer—*Shwetashatar Upanishad*,

4/5; and *Paingalo-panishad* 1/3. The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 9-13 describes these Gunas has having the following colours while it analyses the various components of the Manta OM. The colours are grey or white for the Sata Guna, yellow for Raja Guna, and dark for the Tama Guna.

The *Chandogya Upanishad*, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 of the Sam Veda uses these three colours to describe the different types of characters called Sata, Raja and Tama defining the three basic types of creatures and their individual personality traits and temperaments that exist in this creation.

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 9-13 describes the colours of the Gunas as follows—"The first letter 'A' is symbolically of a yellow colour and represents the predominance of the 'Raja Guna' in this creation. The second letter 'U' is symbolically of a white or grey hue and represents the predominance of 'Sata Guna' in this creation. Finally, the third letter 'M' is symbolically of a dark colour and represents the predominance of the 'Tama Guna' in predominance."

The *Paingal Upanishad*, 1/3-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda clearly states that these three colours were the ones with which Nature representing creation was born and how the supreme creator had subtly entered the entire creation to be uniformly present in its very minutest of corner.

The concept of Gunas affecting the Atma has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially *Maitrayanyu Upanishad*, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition. Nearly all the Upanishads expound on the subject, and the chief amongst them, besides the above, are the *Chandogya* and *Brihad Aranyaka* Upanishads.

The six Gunas or qualities or grand virtues, or the eclectic *Samppatis* or divine assets that a creature is expected to possess, are the following—The six noble and virtuous qualities or Gunas are the following—(i) Sham (ग्म—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (दम—tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (उप्रिति —renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (तितिक्षा—endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (समाधान—solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).

(6) (b) The 6 Gunas or qualities or grand virtues, or Samppati—The six noble and virtuous qualities or Gunas are the following—(i) Sham (ग्म—having self restraint and control; having peace, tranquility, serenity and quietness; being able to suppress desires, yearnings and natural instincts and impulses); Dam (दम—tolerance, forbearance, fortitude); (iii) Upriti (उप्रिति —renunciation, detachment, dispassion, indifference and non-involvement); (iv) Titksha (तितिक्षा—endurance, patience, fortitude, sufferance, equanimity); (v) Samadhan (समाधान—solution, answer, lack of confusion or doubts, clarity of thoughts and conception); and (vi) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—having faith, belief, conviction, reverence and devotion).

(6) (c) The 16 Gunas or vittues that one is expected to posses are the following—(i) Gunvaan—to have virtuousness, auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety. (ii) Virya-vaan—to be able to face all challenges of life; to be valorous, courageous, valiant, resilient and brave. (iii) Dharma-vaan—to know the essence of what constitutes Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and auspiciousness) and inculcate these virtues in one's personal life inspite of all odds. (iv) Kritagya—to have gratitude; to be grateful for even the smallest favour. (v) Satya Vaakya—to always speak the truth, even if it means personal suffering. (vi) Dridha Vrata—to be firm in one's resolve; firmness of determination, beliefs, promises and vows. (vii) Charitra—immaculacy of character. (viii) Sarva Bhuteshu Hitaaye—to be of help to all living beings; to be friendly with and compassionate towards all; to think of everyone's good and welfare. (ix) Vidvaan—to be erudite, sagacious, wise, enlightened, knowledgeable, expert in one's field. (x) Samartha—to be able and competent; capable; proficient; skilled; possess expertise; to have the aptitude, authority and power to implement something. (xi) Priya Darshan—pleasant to look at; welcoming, friendly and affable demeanours and countenance. (xii) Atma-vaan—to be self-realised; to be enlightened about the Atma, the pure consciousness that is the true self of the person. (xiii) Jita-Krodha—one who has conquered anger and wrathfulness. (xiv) Dyutimaan—to be radiant and glorious with the possession of so many grand virtues. (xv) Anashuyakaha—not to find faults with others or criticize others, rather to see their goodness and positive virtues. And (xvi) Devaah Bibhyati—one from whom even the Gods are afraid in the sense that they respect his greatness and grand qualities and do not wish to oppose him, resist him or offend him.

(7) Mental flux:- The five states of the mind are the following—(i) Kshipta (क्षिप्त), (ii) Mudh (मुद्ध), (iii) Vikshipta (विक्षिप्त), (iv) Ekagra (एकाग्र) and (v) Nirudha (निरुद्ध). The 'Kshipta' is the worst type of mind characterised by extreme recklessness and restlessness. It is susceptible to various negative traits such as confusion, conflicts, anger, anxiety, worry, tension, agitations of all kinds etc.

The 'Mudh' is the dull, inert and indolent state of mind. These first two states of mind are predominantly 'Tamas' in nature.

The 'Vikshipta' state is a 'distracted' state of mind in which it swings between the extremes of calmness and agitation. This is a 'Rajsic' quality.

The 'Ekagra' state is a focused or concentrated mind. It is a state in which the mind can keep alert and pin-pointed on any subject it is focusing upon. It helps to cultivate discipline in the aspirant.

The 'Nirudha' state is that state of mind in which there is no mental flux of any kind. It is a kind of trance like state of bliss and happiness. The last two states of mind are called 'Satvik' qualities of the creature.

(8) The five Basic Elements and their Manifestations:- According to the philosophy of the Upanishads, the entire creation is made up of five basic elements called the 'Bhuts'.

These, in different permutations and combinations, combine to reveal themselves as the creation, both animate as well as inanimate.

According to *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, 1/5, these elements are located in various paths of the body of a man and control the different functions as follows—

(A) Sky Element e.g. (i) Antahakaran (discriminatory intellect and wisdom), (ii) Mana (mind), (iii) Buddhi (intelligence), (iv) Chitta (intellect, memory, recollection, concentration) and (v) Ahankar (ego, pride, haughtiness, hypocrisy, arrogance). Its colour is light blue. it extend uptil the top of the head. It is located between the nostrils and the top of the head.

(B) Wind Element e.g. (i) Samaan (the vital wind controlling equal distribution of nourishment and circulation), (ii) Udan (wind moving upwards; controls expectoration), (iii) Vyan (wind that pervades throughout the body; maintains equilibrium), (iv) Apaan (wind passing down the intestine; controls ingestion, digestion and excretion of food) and (v) Pran (breath). Its colour is grey and it resembles smoke or haze. It is located between the navel and the nostrils.

(C) Fire element and Organs of perception, such as— (i) ears, (ii) skin, (iii) eyes, (iv) tongue and (v) nose. Its colour is red like vermillion and its shape is like tongues of flame. It is located between the groins and the navel in the middle and the lower part of the abdomen.

(D) Water element and Senses of perception— (i) hearing, (ii) touch, (iii) sight, (iv) taste and (v) smell. Its colour is silvery white and it is shaped like the crescent moon. It is located between the lower abdomen and knees.

(E) Earth element and Organs of action— (i) mouth, (ii) hands, (iii) legs, (iv) anus and (v) genitals. Its colour is light yellow and it has four corners. It is located between the sole of the feet up to the knees.

There is a slight variation in the points of the body where these elements are located as described in *Jabal Darshan Upanishad*, 8/4-6. According to it, the 'sky' element is found between the eyebrows and the skull, the 'wind' element between the eyebrows and the chest, the 'fire' element between the chest and the groins, the 'water' element between the groin and the knee, and the 'earth' element from knee downwards. These two versions are diagrammatically shown by means of sketches at the end of this appendix.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178, and Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15 describe the patron Gods, shape and colour of these five elements. These have been enumerated under the sub-heading 'The 5 Tattwas' under the main topic dealing with the various Tattwas in serial number no.19 of this appendix.

The *Yoga Tattva Upanishad*, verse nos. 85-103 describes the dominance of the five elements in the body, their location, colour, patron Gods and their Beej (seed/root) Mantra etc. in detail. It goes on to describe how meditation is to be done on these five elements as manifestations of the stupendous dynamic powers of Brahm which has enabled this existence to come into being and sustain itself independently, as well as the rewards or benefits of such

meditation. To quote—

"Verse no. 85 = The earth element is present as a dominant force from the foot to the knees. This earth has four directions, has a subtle yellow colour, and its seed Mantra is the Sanskrit letter (Varna) 'La' (as in 'love'). [There is another connotation of this last part of the verse. The earth is said to contain large and infinite deposits of 'salts' as ores etc. The ocean is also salty. The last word of this verse, i.e. 'Lavarna', indicates this fact.] (85).

"Verse no. 86 = This is the place where the patron God of earth known as Brahma, the four armed and four headed[1] creator of creation, has his symbolic presence. [In other words, the earth is represented by the creator Brahma. This is because the entire living world as we know it is present here on earth and no other planet. The earth is the only known inhabited part of the entire creation where creatures having life and consciousness in them—right from the one-celled amoeba up to the most complex and intelligently developed ones like the humans—live.]

In order to witness his presence and have his (Brahma's) subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the earth element along with its seed Mantra 'La' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Brahma with the above features and with the complexion of gold (86).

[Note—[1]There is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism, and if it is not properly understood in the correct context, a lot of hilarious, absurd and ridiculous situations arise, such as this Brahma with 'four arms and four heads'. From a rational perspective, this is absolute rubbish. But if one were to understand the underlying symbolism and philosophy, things assume a rational meaning. The four heads of Brahma stand for the four Vedas he created or pronounced. These Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation, and they are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. The four arms stand for the four directions of the globe—the north, west, south and east. Since he is the creator of the visible creation, he is expected to take care of the entire earth because it is on earth that all living creatures created by him would live.

Therefore, his four arms are symbolic of his duty and ability of taking care of all the four corners of this living world, and the four Vedas indicate his all-encompassing and all-inclusive knowledge, wisdom and erudition that empower and enable him to do so.

The colour of gold indicates the colour of richness, prosperity and fertility. The egg's yolk is also yellow because it harbours life and is rich with all essential nutrients needed by the nascent creation in its miniature form as the embryo.]

"Verse no. 87 = By concentrating one's attention and doing meditation for a period of five Ghatis (two hours) in the above described manner, an ascetic is able to conquer or subdue the earth element; he becomes the Lord of this element. Such an ascetic never dies due to some kind of shortcoming, fault, weakness or imperfection of the earth element in the body, or any injury caused by it to the body (87).

"Verse no. 88 = The water element has a predominant presence in the region from the knee to the anus. It is symbolically shaped like a half-moon, and its seed Mantra is 'Vam' (as in 'vulgar + sum) (88).

"Verse no. 89-90 = This is the place of symbolic residence of the patron God of water known as Sri Narayan (Lord Vishnu), the four armed, exalted and high Lord who has a crown over his head[1] (indicative of his position as the Lord and emperor of the entire living world), who is pure as crystal (because he is untainted, without any blemish and cannot be demoted from his exalted stature inspite of the fact that he has to look after the routine chores of taking care of the mundane affairs of the multifaceted world ridden with corruption and blemishes of all imaginable types, being its sustainer, nourisher and protector), and who is wearing a yellow coloured cloth (symbolic of his ability to sustain, nourish and protect the world as its emperor).

In order to witness his presence and have his subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the water element along with its seed Mantra 'Vam' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Narayan with the above features in his inner self. He should focus his attention and mind on this vision for a period of five Ghantis (two hours). This helps him in getting rid of all sins and their evil consequences (89-90).

[Note—[1]Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all creatures. His four arms are indicative of this unique ability of his. Now, let us see what are those four units of creation which he is supposed to look after.

There are four types of creatures—viz. (i) 'Andaj' (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) 'Swadej' (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) 'Udbhij' (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) 'Jaraayuj' (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).

Then we have four classes of people in the society, called the four Varanas, and each has four phases, called the four Ashrams. The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

Finally, the four Ashrams are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he

comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihasta Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and mediation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Thus we see that the four arms of Vishnu are indicative of his unique ability to protect the entire world of living creatures.]

"Verse no. 91 = After that, the ascetic need not fear from the water element in anyway, and neither would he die due to it (such as by drowning or by dehydration or thirst).

The fire element has its dominant presence from the anus to the heart region. [That is why all digestion of food and all the major internal organs that are responsible for the upkeep of the body and to continue the cycle of creation and prevent its extinguishing, such as the intestines, kidneys, the reproductive organs, the pancreas etc. are located in this region. It is here that the Kundalini is also located at the base of the spine. Without the presence of the heat in the lower part of the body, the vital airs cannot be heated and empowered to lift the body of an ascetic as has been described in verse no. 53-55 of this Upanishad. In practical life also we observe that the fire is always present at the lower end of the oven and not on its top.] (91).

"Verse no. 92 = The fire element has three corners (i.e. it is shaped symbolically like a triangle), has a red colour and the Sanskrit letter 'Ra' (as in 'run') as its seed or root Mantra. This fire should be stoked and ignited by injecting the air or wind element into it. [This is a common day phenomenon that the fire needs air to remain burning.] (92).

"Verse no. 93 = This is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes[1], who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendorous, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).

[Note—[1]As in the case of Brahma and Vishnu, the symbolism of Shiva having three eyes, which on the face of it appears to be an anomaly, is the following—his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the 'fire element' in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!]

"Verse no. 94 = By meditating this way on the fire element and Lord Shiva for a period of five Ghantis (two hours), the ascetic cannot be tormented by the fire element so much so that it cannot burn or scorch him even if he is made to enter a fiercely burning fire (94).

"Verse no. 95 = The next vital primary element is the air element and it is primarily located in the body between the heart and the middle of the eyebrows in the forehead. It has a symbolic shape of a hexagon, is dark hued, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ya' (as in 'yearn'). The apex of this hexagon is at the point in the forehead where the two eyebrows meet, and where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. That is why it is said to possess the quality of 'Bhaasvar', i.e. to be as bright as the sun during the day time (95).

[Note—In practical terms also, the primary wind that sustains life inside the otherwise dead and inane body is the breath that is inhaled thorough the nose and diverted to the lungs. Both these organs are located in the body in the region between the heart and the mid point of the eyebrows. If we join these organs, i.e. if a line is drawn linking the two lobes of the lungs, the triangular heart, the two shoulders and the root of the nose which has two openings, we will come with a rough shape of a hexagon. The lower-end point would be roughly the lower end of the sternum (i.e. the mid point between the heart and the lungs, the middle of the body where the ribs meet and the heart is felt to throb), and the other end is the root of the nose between the two eyebrows. Since the lower end is embedded in the abdomen, it is said to be 'dark or Krishna' in hue, while the upper end is said to be 'Bhaasvar' or like the sun because it is the location of the two eyes as well as the third eye of wisdom.]

"Verse no. 96 = The vital air or wind element is located in the body in the designated place marked by the letter 'Ya' of the Sanskrit language (as described in verse no. 95). The ascetic should always remember the all-knowing, omniscient and all-pervading Lord of all creation, known as Ishwar, in this region. This Lord is called 'Vishwatomukham', literally the face of the entire world1 (96).

[Note—The Ishwar is called the 'face of the world' obviously because when we see anyone, we first see his face and the person is recognised by his face. Since the entire creation is the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, it is the visible face of Brahm or Ishwar. This Ishwar is also the all-pervading supreme Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma which resides in the individual creature as his true 'self', as well as in the form of the universal Spirit that is indistinguishable from the air or wind element which pervades throughout the world. Even as the air element is uniformly and universally present everywhere in this creation, this 'spirit' is therefore also present in equal measure everywhere. This spirit in the form of the air element is Ishwar or Lord of the world in the sense that no life is possible without it on this earth.]

"Verse no. 97 = If the ascetic meditates upon the supreme Lord called Vishwatomukh for a continuous period of five Ghantis (two hours), he can travel or move about in the sky just like the wind or air element. [In other words, he becomes as light as the air or wind element.] He has no fear from this element anymore and he never dies due to this element. [In other words, he never suffers from any disease related to the air or wind in the body such as from asthma, flatulence, improper movement of bowls, digestion, distribution of nutrients and blood inside the body, and all other functions that are governed by one or the other vital winds inside the body. He has not to suffer from suffocation and the fear from falling from a high place and dieing because in that case he would float in the air. Storms and other fierce forms of the wind cannot harm him also.] (97).

"Verse no. 98 = The sky element is located between the point midway of the two eyebrows and the top of the head. It is shaped like the sky (i.e. featureless, measureless and like an inverted parabolic transparent dish or bowl), is of the colour of smoke, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ha' (as in 'hut'). It is illuminated with a diffused light like the sky is during the daytime (98).

"Verse no. 99 = The ascetic should inject this sky element and fill it with the air or wind, and visualise that Lord Shankar (Shiva) is present here, seated on the letter 'Ha[1]'. This Lord is a personification of the great Lord of all the Gods, and hence also known as Mahadeva[2], literally the great God. This Mahadeva is like a dot or point[3] on the one hand, and like the vast, endless, featureless and infinite sky[4] on the other hand. In the latter form he is known as Sada Shiva[5], i.e. the eternal and ever-present Lord Shiva (99).

[Note—[1]There is a lot of brilliant symbolism here. The letter 'Ha' is the first letter of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan. This bird is said to be very clean and wise, and therefore is the vehicle of the goddess of learning and wisdom, goddess Saraswati. By saying that the patron Lord of the sky element sits on this letter 'Ha', it is meant that this Lord is wisdom, erudition, learning and knowledge personified, he has full command

over them. Hence he is the supreme Brahm.

[2]By this logic, Shankar is another name of Brahm. Since Brahm is the one from whom the entire creation has emerged, he is the greatest of all the Gods and their Lord, hence he is called Mahadeva. Thus, Mahadeva and Shankar become interchangeable and synonymous.

[3]The origin of the creation was due to a vibration in the cosmic primordial gel much like ripples on the surface of a calm lake. This generated waves and these waves created energy to power the initial phases of the process of creation. But the vibration must have started from one single point. This is the 'dot' referred in this verse. It also refers to the fact that everything in existence has its origin from one 'point' source known as Brahm. The concept of Bindu and 'dot' have been explained in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 37, 39-40, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

[4]Now, this Brahm is not limited to one single point, but it spread as far and wide as the vast sky could spread. It was diffused in the sky like smoke, and that is why the colour of the sky element is symbolically depicted to be like that of the smoke.

[5]'Shiva' means someone who is auspicious, truthful and beautiful, and 'Sada' means one who is always the same, is constant, perpetual, consistent, ever-present, uniform and universal. All these qualities are present in the supreme Brahm. That is why the latter is called Sada Shiva.

So in a nutshell, Shankar and Shiva is the same great God who is the Lord of all the Gods as well as of the rest of the creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified, besides possessing all the qualities of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise, various skills etc. personified by goddess Saraswati riding on the Hans. The concept of 'Hans' has been elaborately explained in a number of Upanishads, viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hanso-panishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.]

"Verse no. 100 = This Lord Shiva is most pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishads deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishads is personified here in him.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a crescent moon on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation

consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The five heads of Shiva stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the sky or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are five subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or Koshas present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intelluctual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.— Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The ten arms of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash— the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash— the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash— the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash— the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The three eyes consist of two normal conventional eyes and the third eye of wisdom and deep insight.]

"Verse no. 101 = That Lord Shiva is armed with all types of weapons (as a symbol of protection against or to counter all sorts of worldly evils and faults that might attack a spiritual aspirant and attempt to pull him down from the exalted position that he has acquired by so hard effort). He is also decorated with numerous ornaments (as a symbol of his divine beauty and magnificence, as a token of his natural charm and a pleasant and appealing appearance). Goddess Parvati his divine consort and she literally is his other half. [That is, if Shiva is the supreme Brahm or Supreme Being, Parvati is his Prakriti and Maya. If Shiva is the Viraat Purush, Parvati is Mother Nature.] He is the one who grants boons and is the root and primary cause of all conceivable causes and reasons that exist in this world (101).

"Verse no. 102 = If that Lord Shiva is meditated upon as a personification of the sky element and as being inherently present in this element, it is certain that the practitioner is able to acquire the mystical powers to move through the sky (like a bird or other sky-borne creatures).

By this meditation, the spiritual aspirant feels an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness no matter where he lives[1] (102).

[Note—[1]This is because he feels the freedom to move about any where he likes, and is not constrained to the earth. Another interpretation is that he feels as light as the air or wind element because this is the only element that fills the entire space of the sky and can move in at its will. He feels unrestrained and free like the bird. He also feels untainted, unblemished, un-faulted and untarnished like the pure and colourless sky element. He feels infinite, vast, open, eternal and imperishable as the sky element. He feels himself as being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-covering just like the sky element. This notion and feeling would naturally be spiritually and emotionally uplifting and morale boosting for him; he would feel elated and accomplished.]"

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 30-32 describes how a spiritual can obtain Mukti by meditating upon the supreme transcendental Divinity represented by the Mantra OM by contemplating upon its different levels of sublimity.

'Verse no.30 = Within a time of four months he is able to have visions of the divine Gods. Within five months he acquires mystical powers which make him as powerful as the Gods themselves. And within six months[1], if he so wishes, he can obtain the final liberation and deliverance for himself when he achieves the exalted stature of 'Kaivalya'[2] (30).

[Note—[1]The different periods of time have been reiterated elsewhere also. Refer Yoga Kundali Upanishad, 1/13, 2/31-36, 42, 44-48; and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse nos. 122-127.

[2]Kaivalya is that state of liberation of the soul when the ascetic's Pran or vital winds leave the subtle space inside the body and merge with the cosmic wind present outside his body. The path taken for this final escape is narrated in verse nos. 26-27. This sort of deliverance is sought by ascetics who have enlightened enough to realise that their 'true self' is the pure consciousness Atma which is a 'spirit' having no forms, no contours, no sizes and no colours. This 'self' and the cosmic 'Self' are no different from one another, they are both pure consciousness, there is nothing but this consciousness that is of any value and importance in creation, that this 'consciousness

is at the root cause of creation and is known as the supreme transcendental Brahm, that there is no other deity to whom worship and honour should be offered than this pure conscious Atma, and there is no greater 'truth' than this fundamental realisation. Refer Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, verse no. 148.

Such a self-realised and Brahm-realised ascetic would not wish any other form of emancipation and salvation, called 'Mukti', than to reunite his Atma (pure conscious soul) and his Pran (the vital winds that drive the body and keep the Atma protected and sustained inside the otherwise inane and gross body of the creature) with the supreme Atma and transcendental Pran of this creation known as Brahm. Since Brahm is omnipresent and all-pervading, since this divine entity is formless and attributeless, the ascetic simply removes the barrier between his 'true self' residing in his gross body as his Atma by discarding the latter, and merges with his principal form as the 'spirit' which leaves the body to vanish for ever in the cosmic 'Spirit' that is universally present everywhere. He need not die and go to some imaginary 'heaven' where such and such God lives, because for him that 'God' is no one else than his own true self or his own conscious Spirit.]

"Verse no. 31-32= While contemplating upon the five elementary elements of creation, such as the earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky, one should meditate on one or more 'Matras' or basic sounds that constitute the texture of the cosmic fabric revealed in the form of the ethereal divine word OM representing the entire creation in its nascent and primary form. It is from OM symbolising these basic elements that the rest of the visible and invisible creation has evolved. The meditation should start from the grossest and heaviest of the five elements because it represents the physical 'earth' upon which we live, which needs no other proof of its existence besides its own visibility and the physical support it gives the entire visible creation, and which is the easiest element to visualise and focus one's attention on. The meditation then progresses gradually to higher level, and the five elements are meditated upon depending upon their subtlety and sublimity, with the most sublime and subtle of them being meditated at the last because of the difficulty of its accessibility. [It is like the case of the student first learning about the world in class one through visual pictures, and slowly and in due course of time graduates to become a great scientist or philosopher who would show others the way instead of learning about it himself!]

So, while contemplating upon the 'earth' element, one should meditate on all the five sound forms or syllables[1] that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'water' element, one should meditate on the four sound forms or syllables[2] that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'fire or energy' element, one should meditate on the three sound forms or syllables[3] that constitute the word OM; while contemplating upon the 'air or wind' element, one should meditate on the two sound forms or syllables[4] that constitute the word OM (31); and while contemplating upon the 'sky or space' element, one should meditate on the one sound form or monosyllable[5] that constitute the word OM.

Finally, while contemplating upon the ultimate Truth represented by Pranav which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm who is invisible, imperceptible, attributeless, almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, immanent, all-encompassing and

all-pervading element in creation, one should meditate on only the half syllable[6] which has no distinctive sound, no special form, no definable characteristic or attribute, and no other existence except as pure cosmic Consciousness.

A wise, erudite and enlightened ascetic regards his body as the habitat of all the five elements of creation. He visualises that his body is the microcosmic cosmos, with the grossest and the heaviest of the five elements lying at the bottom (i.e. in his leg region) and the subtlest and the lightest at the top (i.e. in his head region), while the rest of the elements occupying the space in between depending upon their grossness or subtlety. Thus, he starts his meditation at the bottom, i.e. in his toes, focusing his attention at the tip of the toes and consciously feeling the presence of life and vitality in this part of the body. Then he gradually shifts his attention from down upwards till he reaches the top of the head in a progressive manner.

In other words, for the purposes of meditation, he visualises that the 'earth' element is present in his body from the tip of the toes to the knees, the 'water' element from the knees to the hip region, the 'fire' element from the hip to the heart region (i.e. in the area of the abdomen), the 'air' element in the region from the chest to the area of the nostrils, and the 'sky' element in the top of the head. Finally, when he has reached this stage, he would have automatically become self-realised and enlightened. Then he would no longer need a prop or support in his meditation, and would hear the cosmic sound of ether reverberating in his head. This sound called 'Naad' has no definition and characterizations, and therefore it is regarded as a 'half-syllable' or just an indication of the presence of consciousness that can be felt and experienced and witnessed, but not represented by any of the known letters or syllables. It is the fundamental and primordial sound that existed even before the first trace of creation had even been imagined or visualised.

This most evolved form of meditation and contemplation helps the ascetic to gain authority over all the elements in creation. [And since the body is a product of these five elements, it naturally follows that he is able to exercise full control over his body.] (32). [31-32.]

[Note—[1]The five Matras of OM are the following—A, O, U, M and the humming sound produced when the mouth is finally closed after the final letter M has been pronounced. This last sound resembles the reverberation heard when there is a distant explosion, indicating the ripples formed in the cosmic ether immediately after the first 'Big Bang' or cosmic explosion. From the metaphysical perspective, it was the first step taken by the supreme Brahm to initiate creation. These first ripples formed waves on the surface of this otherwise calm surface of the cosmic ether which overlapped each other as they moved forward from the central core of the cosmic explosion. The result was the generation of huge cosmic waves, the like of which are witnessed in the stormy ocean, and these waves produced 'sound' as they rolled on from their point of origin. This sound is conceptualised as OM. The cosmic debris and stupendous energy generated by the combined effect of the explosion and these waves resulted in the formation of the rest of the elements, and these elements formed the building blocks of the creation as we know it today.

[2]The four Matras make the entity a wee bit lighter and subtler than that with five Matras. This is a metaphoric way of saying that it symbolises the next lighter form of creation, or the form that is a bit less gross and a bit more subtle than the one with the full load of five Matras. If the five Matras are represented by the earth element, which is the heaviest of the five elements in creation, then the one slightly lighter and less dense than earth is 'water' element. Hence, while meditating upon the water element, the ascetic should focus his attention on the mental repetition of these four letters of OM, which are A, O, U and M, and consciously visualise the presence of consciousness in the region of the body from the knee to the hip region. That is why urine is formed in the lower part of the abdomen, and when one remains standing for long periods of time, the legs swell due to accumulation of bodily water in them.

[3]The three Matras of OM are the basic sounds of A, U and M. Applying the same logic as described in paragraph 2 above of this note, this is symbolic of an element which is lighter and subtler than water. Such an entity is the 'fire' element. It is present in the abdomen region, and that is why food eaten is digested here just like it is being cooked in an oven. So, while moving the focus of this attention from the hip region upwards towards throat, the ascetic should imagine the fire element as burning inside him and contemplate upon these three primary sounds that constitute OM. The three Matras of OM are indicative of three dynamic forces of creation called 'Brahami' related to Brahma the creator, 'Raudri' related to Rudra the concluder of creation, and 'Vaishnavi' related to Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation—refer Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 86.

[4]The two Matras of OM are the two forms of sound produced by pronouncing the twin letters A and U together, and then U and M together. This is the second most subtle and lightest element in creation, and is known as the 'air or wind' element. It would be noted that when either of these twin letters are pronounced, a resonating sound is created, much like the rumbling of a plane taking off or landing in a distant respectively. The first two letters A and U = AU symbolise the taking off of the plane or the unfolding of the creation, and the second group of letters U and M = UM sound like the plane is landing, symbolising the conclusion or resting of the creation. These two Matras represent the 'sky or space' elements as it is in the space of the sky that all other elements had emerged in the beginning. This is because an open space is needed for anything to raise its head and stand up to make its presence felt; nothing can grow and develop in the confines of a closed space. Thus, while moving his focus of attention higher from the heart region to the forehead region (or the area around the eyebrows), the ascetic should concentrate upon these two Matras of OM as representing the consciousness present in his body.

[5]The single Matra of OM is the monosyllable word itself. This happens when the meditation has reached its climax, and the ascetic has submerged himself in the cosmic Naad so much so that he literally drowns in its ethereal waves, and the cosmic reverberation of OM overwhelms his consciousness. Even as a man submerged in the water of the ocean loses his sense of distinction of anything pertaining to the external world, because he does not hear any of the genres of sound that have their existence

above the surface of the ocean but hears only the sounds inherently present in the water of the ocean, an ascetic who has finally submerged himself in the overwhelming sound of the cosmic Naad (the cosmic ethereal sound that is present in the background of this visible creation) and has tasted its blissfulness in his mind, he does not care about any formalities, and the only thing that he hears is the resonance of the divine cosmic word OM reverberating in his head. This happens in the highest echelons of the body in the area of the head between the forehead and the top of the skull where the 'Brahm-Randhra is situated.

Thus, the ascetic should contemplate upon OM in its entirety when he has reached this exalted state of existence when he can withdraw his attention from the rest of the body and focus it on the single are of it in the head. Obviously, in this state he would be unaware of the presence of the other parts of the body, and perceive consciousness only in the upper part of the head, i.e. in the region of the Brahm-Randhra. This is the highest form of Yoga, and it brings about a union of the 'self' with the 'cosmic Self'.

It would be pertinent to note here that verse no. 27 has stated that the realised ascetic's Pran or life forces leave his body through this aperture called the Brahm-Randhra. The reason is clear now—when the resonance of OM reaches a certain peek level, it creates such a crescendo of sound that the skull splits open due to the accumulated sound energy by overlapping sound waves.]

(9) Brahm Randhra & Brahm Vivar & Brahm Dwar—This *Brahm Randhra* is a hair-like joint or slit on the top of the skull where the two parts of it are joined. It is believed that the supreme Brahm had entered the creature's body at the time of creation through this slit. Great ascetic aspire to access Brahm by concentrating their attention here; at the time of death their Pran or the vital wind leaves the body through this opening by splitting it.

The *Brahm Vivar* is literally a hole like aperture present at the back of the mouth where it opens into the wind pipe which connects the lungs to the nose. This is the location of the 'Talu Chakra' or the swirling subtle energy center located at the back of the palate. It has a direct link to the Brahm Randhra present in the cranium at the top of the head, and is the hair-like slit marking the joint between the two parts of the skull.

This Brahm Vivar is also called *Brahm Dwar* or the 'doorway or pathway leading to Brahm' because it opens directly into the duct that connect the lower part of the body to the Brahm Randhra and through which the vital winds called Pran travel during the practice of Yoga (such as Pranayam, Kundalini and Sushumna Naadi activation, various Aasans and Bhandas etc.)

According to Yoga philosophy, the Sushumna Naadi, the nerve that passes through the center of the spinal cord, goes straight up to the Brahm Randhra. This nerve is blocked at its base by the tip of the Kundalini. When the latter is activated, the block is removed, and the energy trapped in the body rises up this nerve to stimulate the brain, giving the aspirant a sense of accomplishment.

The opening at the lower part of the abdomen, in the region of the Mool Kand or the groins, from where the Apaan wind enters the Kundalini to ignite it is also called the lower Brahm Randhra because it is an 'opening or aperature' through which the vital winds enter the Kundalini and move up the Sushumma Naadi to reach the top of the head to find an access to the cosmic consciousness and its attendent sense of extreme ecstasy and bliss.

The *Kshuriko-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 18-20 describe the concept of obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance by the Pran escaping through the Brahm Randhra. To quote—

"Verse nos. 18-19 = 'Dhyan Yoga', literally meaning meditative exercises done by intense concentration of the mind and use its energy as if it were a sharp-edged knife (much like the use of laser beams to perform complicated surgery in modern medicine), can be employed by the practitioner of Yoga (i.e. by the seeker of true liberation and deliverance) to rupture or pierce through or bore into all the Naadis and let the Pran enter them. But the Sushumna Naadi is the only one which cannot be broken through or its sanctity violated[1].

A wise and sagacious person is one who pierces all the Naadis in this life itself. This is to ensure that his Pran or vital winds and life forces present in his body, which had been till now wandering aimlessly in the subtle space inside the gross body, is able to enter into these ducts and move up the correct path that can lead to its proper destination. Since the wind trapped inside the body has originated form the all-pervading free wind or air element present in the cosmic space, its 'natural destination' is this cosmic space, and its 'liberation' is its escape from the enclosure of the gross body and mingling with the parent body of the cosmic wind outside. This is its final 'deliverance' from all artificial entrapments created by the gross body because once outside, the air element would merge indistinguishably with the cosmic wind element and lose its independent identity. A realised ascetic allows this to happen when he uses the will power and determination of his mind to forcefully make his Pran to bore into the various Naadis, and move inside them. Once inside, the energised and heated Pran unclogs all the veins and nerves by its mere power of force and de-toxifying abilities, and moves freely inside them. It gradually moves up the body much like hot air, allowed to enter a network of tubes, has a propensity to move freely inside them and head upwards because of the fact that any hot air moves up and not down. Pran, being lighter or 'subtler' than all the other elements in the body because it now resembles hot and energised air or vital wind element, has overcome all resistance and is able to enter that path that leads to arousal of the hitherto dormant spiritual energy lying trapped in the heart as the pure consciousness of the creature. Determined and steadfast practice of meditation, along with contemplation on the main objective of doing Yoga and concentrating upon the Truth, keeps the ascetic firmly on his path.

In its final leg, the Pran is able to sufficiently gather enough energy and force and momentum to unfurl the energy in the coiled Kundalini[2] at the bottom of the spine. When the Pran sneaks into it, it finds entry into the Sushumna Naadi which has its lower end blocked by this Kundalini. Heated vital winds then snake up this tube, much like mercury moving up the thermometer, and finally reach the top of the head at the spot called the Brahm-Randhra.

When the pressure builds up, the final explosion occurs, and this Brahm-Randhra splits open, allowing the Pran to escape into the outer space for ever. This stage is called 'Kaivalya Mukti', or the 'one of its kind' of liberation and deliverance for the aspirant seeking freedom, because once the Pran merges with the cosmic wind or air element, there is no question of its re-entering the body. This is because the body of such an ascetic is allowed to disintegrate into its basic elements, such as the earth, water and fire. The subtle space inside the body would then automatically coalesce with the open space outside. No trace of the earlier creature remains. This is obviously the final closure of the scene for him.

Thus, the wise and sagacious practitioner of Yoga should use the inviolable authority and majestic influence of his Atma, i.e. the astounding supernatural power of the pure conscious 'self', to firmly direct and strictly order the mind and the intellect to use their stupendous abilities and skills along with the energised and heated vital winds called Pran present inside the body to jointly rupture and bore through the different Naadis and penetrate them. That is, the wise ascetic uses the stupendous and powerful authority inherently bestowed in his own 'self', called his pure conscious Atma, to diligently and purposefully divert all the efforts of the two powerful instruments that he has at his disposal, i.e. the Mana (mind) and the Pran (vital winds and other life forces inside the body), to actively practice strict Yoga (as described in this Upanishad).

This Yoga practice then becomes as powerful and effective as a heated sharp-edged knife or 'Kshuri' that enables the ascetic to symbolically cut through the Naadis in a surgical and precise fashion. The revitalizing Pran then enters them and completely fills them. Then the Naadis become as vibrant and invigorated as the healthy Jasmine flower which gives out a sweet fragrance typical of it (18-19).

[Note—[1]In other words, since this Sushumna Naadi symbolically represents the eternal and irrefutable Truth in creation, and remains soaked in its exuberant glory, it is impossible to subdue it and cause any disturbance in its serenity. This is a metaphoric way of saying that once the ascetic reaches that stage of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation when he has realised the actual Truth and the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity attendant with it, no force in creation can ever sway him from his exalted stature. He is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of spiritual achievement where he becomes invincible for the myriad temptations and delusions surging in the world which drown all other creatures in their swirling whirlpool.

The word pierce when used in the spiritual context is to overcome the resistance of the physical body and its various components, including the Naadis, to any effort that causes inconvenience or discomfort to it. Yoga is a rigorous self-disciplining spiritual exercise that does not compromise on principles. Since the body is accustomed to remaining engrossed in comforts and enjoying pleasures emanating from the material world, it is natural for it to resist any change in the status and be subjected to control and discipline. The Naadis are singled out for such 'piercing or rupturing' or vanquishing or overcoming or subduing because it is through the network of Naadis that the body keeps itself alive as consciousness flows through them. The Naadis carry sense impulses

from one part of the body to the other; it is through them that the blood flows; it is through the Naadis that the mind is able to receive the sensory inputs from the sense organs located on the surface of the body and then help the body to respond; it is the Naadis which are like the central network of wires and circuits of an electronic equipment. If the Naadis are blocked or made to stop working, the body would be as good as dead. Hence, the best way to control the entire edifice of the body is to control its command and control network in the form of the Naadis.

[2]Kundalini—The Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-16 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is dedicated entirely on this concept of Kundalini. Other major Upanishads that deal with the topic of Yoga also deal with the concept of Kundalini because both are intertwined concepts.]

"Verse no. 20 = In this way, the wise ascetic should properly understand how to establish his control over the different Naadis, those which are conducive to his spiritual upliftment and therefore considered 'Shubh' or auspicious (such as the Virja, Pingla and Ida Naadis mentioned in verse no. 16) as well as those which relate more to his worldly interactions and mundane existence (such as the Naadis that control his digestive, excretory and reproductory functions).

The Sushumna Naadi is superior to all the Naadis in the body, and the wise and sagacious ascetic is one who focuses his attention on this Naadi. That is, he diligently practices to divert his Pran (vital winds and life-infusing conscious factors) into this duct and channelise the Pran's energy into activating it so that the Pran can ultimately reach the point on the top of the head, the Brahm-Randhra, from where it can finally make its exit from the body for good, thereby liberating the ascetic from the shackle of the gross body for ever, and delivering his soul from the compulsion of having to live in this body to the accompaniment of its associated torments.

When his attention is exclusively and firmly fixed on this Sushumna Naadi, he obtains access to the supreme transcendental Brahm representing the eternal fount of truth, beatitude and felicity. This achievement provides him with permanent liberation and deliverance from the body. In other words, he does not have to take birth again with a body[1] (20).

[Note—[1]This is because he has already detached himself from all the deeds done by the body, being totally unattached with the latter, and not-involved in the world in which the body lives, thereby freeing him from either being associated with these deeds and their consequences, whether good or bad, or with any of the entrapments of the world and the latter's tainting effects. He has also realised the delusory nature of the artificial world of material objects, and therefore has lost all charms and attractions for it along with the material comforts and sensual pleasures that it offers to the creature. With no baggage of insatiate desires and yearnings, no unfulfilled aspirations and hopes, he has nothing pending and unfulfilled at the time of death for which he would want to take another birth in order to finish off his incomplete tasks or fulfill his dreams. This state of total and sincere renunciation entitles him to become a 'liberated' soul, and since 'soul' is an disembodied ethereal body of infinite cosmic proportions, being another form of

the cosmic wind or air element, it simply coalesces with this element as soon as the ascetic dies and the Pran leaves the gross body by rupturing the skull at the point of the Brahm-Randhra.

In this context, refer Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 both of which belong to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 27 describes how the ascetic obtains liberation and deliverance from the entrapment of this body when his Pran escapes through the Brahm Randhra. To quote—"The valves of the subtle heart are like the trap-doors through which the vital winds called 'Pran' present in the body enter the path called 'Sushumna'[1] which snakes upwards (from the bottom of the spinal cord) and reach the top of the head. At this top end is the opening through which the Pran can finally escape from the cage of the body and find permanent liberation, thereby delivering the ascetic for good from the captivity of the body. This opening in the skull is called 'Brahm-Randhra', and it is also called the symbolic 'door of Moksha', or the door that opens up to enable the Pran or the vital life-bearing winds present in the ascetic's body to escape from its entrapments and provide the ascetic with final liberation and deliverance for his 'self'[2].

Another name for this Brahm-Randhra is 'Surya Mandal' or the space around the Sun in the sky. This is a symbolic way of saying that as soon as the vital winds called Pran escape from the body into the outer atmosphere, the sense of liberation and expansion is akin to going up high in the air, much above the gravitational pull of the earth, and feeling a profound sense of weightlessness and expansion so typical in the higher reaches of the solar system. While on the earth the body feels so heavy and constrained by its physical limitations, but higher in the deep recesses of the cosmos the sense and feeling of liberation and expansion is so exhilarating and elating that no words can define them. Similarly, when the expert and wise ascetic practices Yoga and manages to sufficiently control his vital winds so that he can divert them from remaining trapped inside the body and wandering aimlessly in it to moving upwards through the duct in the body called Sushumna, to finally reach the top of the head and then escape from the hair-like slit known as 'Brahm-Randhra' present there into the outer space called the 'Surya Mandal', it is said that the ascetic has attained liberation and deliverance from the physical limitations imposed on the Pran by the gross body (27).

[Note—[1]The Sushumna duct is the nerve going from the bottom of the spinal cord, through its central core, right up to the top of the head. According to Yoga philosophy, there is a coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine, and it is called Kundalini. When it is activated, the energy trapped inside it also snakes up this same Sushumna nerve to go up to the top of the head. As hot air is known to rise up in a closed vessel and escape through any opening at the top, like the spout of a kettle, the heated vital winds inside the body also rise up when Pranayam is practiced. The heart is the pump of the body, and it is the subtle sight where the consciousness known as the Atma is present. The best proof of this is when the heart stops functioning, all other signs of life in the body would also immediately collapse. On the other hand, as long as the heart continues

to beat, the man is said to be 'alive' inspite of the fact that his other organs might have ceased to function. For example, a man paralysed in the limbs, or one suffering from the failure of one or the other internal organs such as the liver and kidneys is deemed to be alive as long as the heart beats. Even when the mind and intellect are not working properly, for instance in a mad man or when the man is in comatose state, he is not declared dead because the heart is still functioning.

The heart is the sanctum sanctorum where the revered deity is enshrined. This 'deity' is Brahm in the form of the consciousness known as the Atma which is in turn the 'true self' of the creature. The rest of the body is merely a 'vehicle or a chariot' for this 'self' to reach its destination. Refer Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 20.

So, heart is the defining factor which determines whether or not the ascetic is alive. That is why it is the site of the consciousness or Atma. Prans is also synonymous with life, and therefore both the Pran and the Atma co-exist. Now, this Atma or pure consciousness uses the vehicle of the Pran to move out of the body of the ascetic at the time of his death.

The wind needs some opening in the body to go out of it, and these openings are referred to as the doors of the body because they facilitate the exit of the vital wind along with the consciousness from the enclosure of the body. According to one version, there are said to be nine doors in the body through which it can move out. These so-called 'nine doors of the body' are two ears, two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus, and one urethra. Refer Shwetashwtar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, 3/18.

Besides these nine, there is the 'tenth door' or opening, and it is this 'Brahm Randhra' present at the top of the head.

According to Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 1, there are eleven doors of the body. They are the following—two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, navel, anus, genitals and Brahm-randhra (the hair like slit on the top of the head).

A practitioner of Yoga or meditation is able to control this exit; he is able to determine how his Atma or consciousness, representing his 'true self', leaves his body along with the Pran by the means of meditative exercises. The escape of the vital winds (Pran) along with the consciousness (Atma) through the hair-like slit called the Brahm-Randhra present at the top of the head is considered as the best path to leave the body as compared to other means of leaving it. Since everyone wants the best type of end for himself, it is but natural to expect that the ascetic would endeavour and strive to ensure that he trains himself sufficiently enough to ensure that his Pran, along with his conscious 'self' or Atma, would leave the body by the best path available to it, and it is obviously the top of the head. This word 'top' itself indicates something which is the best, something that is excellent and most desired.

Hence, the end obtained by the conscious Atma by its escape through this symbolically 'highest placed door' in the body is tantamount to its obtaining the most exalted state of permanent deliverance from the entrapments of the body. It is like the Atma of that ascetic being welcomed in the palace of the supreme Emperor where other such noble

and liberated souls have their abode.

Refer Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17, and Kshuriko-panishad, verse no. 18-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which narrate how Mukti is obtained by the Pran when it escapes through the Brahm Randhra.]"

The *Yog Kundali Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17 describe how the Pran reaches the Brahm Randhra Chakra, or the subtle energy center located in the top of the head where the Brahm Randhra is located, and provides liberation to the ascetic. To quote—

"Verse no. 12 = Having acquired the knowledge of these six Chakras, the aspirant should first focus on concentrating the Vayu (i.e. the Pran winds; the vital wind forces in the body which keep the body alive) one by one on these, raising it from the lower level to the next higher level until it reaches the Sahasraar Chakra where the extreme sense of bliss and ecstasy is witnessed by him. But this is not the goal. He should divert it still ahead and push it upwards into the head (so that ultimately it reaches the top of the head to enter the Brahm Randhra Chakra[1]) (12).

[Note—[1]The concept of how the ascetic is able to obtain final Mukti or liberation and deliverance when his Pran or vital life-bearing winds representing consciousness reaches the Brahm Randhra have been elaborately explained elsewhere in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, and Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

"Verse no. 13-17 = By this practice, the Pran gets established in the symbolic universe located at the top of the head[1]. In other words, the spiritual aspirant gains knowledge of everything worth knowing in this world.

In this holistic manner, the ascetic is able to have knowledge of and become enlightened about all the vital factors of life present in his body which is treated as a miniature universe—i.e. he acquires knowledge of and gets acquainted with such potentially powerful aspects of the universe as Vayu (the various vital winds and their functions and how to harness their potential powers), the Bindu (literally the 'drop' and 'point', here referring to his vital forces of life and inherent strength that is represented by the drop of semen which he becomes able to self-control as well as the drop of blood and lymph and other important fluids in the body, and also to the point in the forehead where he experiences the exhilarating sense of extreme bliss and ecstasy when the Pran reaches this point during meditation), the Chakras (the swirling energy centers of his body which were hitherto clogged and unable to release their divine energies but which now have been opened up, empowering the aspirant with stupendous energy and powers), and the Chitta (the subtle aspect of the mind, the sub-conscious mind and its astounding abilities and powers).

This metaphorically makes them aware of the supreme authority and the universal cosmic power that regulates the entire universe, and this knowledge fills them with the ecstasy and a sense of fulfillment that comes with eclectic knowledge of the 'Supreme' and being acquainted first hand with the 'Lord' of creation. [After all, this is the ultimate aim of

all spiritual endeavours—to become acquainted with the supreme Brahm. So, when the ascetic is able to achieve this exalted stage of enlightenment, he indeed becomes Brahm-realised.]

This is the culmination of Yoga—aimed to bring about a union between the individual and the Supreme Being. This is called the state of Samadhi wherein the ascetic tastes the nectar-like bliss of truth realisation and self-realisation [13 ½].

Just like the case wherein the fire inherent in the firewood cannot be brought to light without rubbing the latter vigorously, the astounding potentials and magnificent powers of Yoga cannot be demonstrated without stringent and painstaking practice [14 ½].

Even as a lighted lamp covered by a clay pot cannot show its light unless the pot is broken, the brilliant light of enlightenment and self-realisation that emanates from the knowledge that the ascetic acquires of the supreme Truth of creation known as the cosmic Consciousness when he has successfully completed his Yoga practice and has experienced its attendant bliss and ecstasy that is likened to dripping nectar called Amrit inside his own self (as his pure conscious Atma) cannot be brought to light unless the covering in the form of the pot-like gross body is done away with[2]. This is possible with the help of and guidance from a wise and self-realised Guru (who is a moral preceptor and an expert Yoga teacher) [16 ½].

The Guru is like a 'Karnadhaar', i.e. a boatman[3], who can take a man across this world which is like a deep sea that is choppy and awe inspiring [17]. (13-17).

[Note—[1]Obviously, the skull and its inside do resemble the inverted 'hemisphere of the sky' under which the entire universe is located. The brain is also located here, and the latter is the center of knowledge and wisdom without which life would be as good as non-existent. The grosser part of this brain, the tissues etc. are like the lifeless parts of this universe such as rocks and mountains etc., while its subtle part, the thinking and intellectual part—i.e. the mind and intellect, are like 'life' personified. 'Life' does not simply mean living like an animal, but living a fruitful life of intelligent and auspicious living which is only made possible by the intelligent mind which forms the subtle part of the brain.

[2]The body is a gross thing much like the clay pot, while the consciousness residing in it is like the lighted lamp burning inside the pot. That is why consciousness is often called 'self-illuminated' because it gives light. In the present context, the 'getting rid of the body' has two connotations—one is to actually leave the body which the ascetic accomplishes by doing Yoga and forcing his Pran to make its exit from the Brahm Randhra at the culmination of Yoga, while the second meaning would be to disassociate detach himself from the physical gross body and realise that his true self is the pure consciousness that is an ethereal Spirit. This Spirit is like the wind or air element that is not limited like the body, and is free from all the encumbrances associated with the gross body. Further, when the ascetic de-links himself from the body, he is not at all affected by the grossness and faults of the latter. This is what is meant here. A truly self-realised and acclaimed ascetic would rise above the grossness and limiting affects

of the body and become universal and ethereal like the Spirit that is his Atma.

[3]The word Karnadhaar literally means a helmsman, but here the meaning 'a boatman' is more apt because he is supposed to take his ward, the spiritual aspirant, across a 'sea' represented by this world. Only an expert boatman can do this.]"

(10) The words **Contemplation and Meditation** have some aspects which are common to both and some aspects which are different. Let us have a brief glimpse at both of them.

The dictionary describes 'contemplation' as— to reflect and consider, to look at attentively, to study, and to intend calmly. This is the meaning of the word in its transitive verb form. The intransitive verb meaning is— to think seriously, attentive viewing. As a noun it means— a matter of thought. A contemplative mind is one which is inclined to think deeply on any matter; it is the opposite of an impulsive, reckless and restless mind. It is 'pondering on any subject, to weigh the pros and cons of any subject in the mind carefully'.

But this deep attention and pondering should be discriminative in nature because a person has to have interest in any subject to be able to focus his attention on it for any length of time. The trick is to be 'positively discriminative', that is to focus the attention on positive aspects of life rather than the degrading and demoralizing negative aspects, and even in the positive sphere, trying to delve deeper and deeper in to reality, and rise higher and higher in understanding of the ultimate Truth.

The word contemplation is derived from the Latin word contemlare which means 'to gaze attentively'. In the mystical and spiritual sense, it means 'knowledge consisting in the partial or complete identification of the knower with the object of knowledge with the resultant loss of the person's own individuality'. Since individualism is lost, the person begins to identify himself with the larger canvas of existence in the form of the cosmic Nature. This identification of the individual with the cosmos is synonymous with the identification of his soul called the Spirit with the supreme Soul or Universal Spirit called Brahm.

Sankaracharya defines it as follows in his commentary on Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 1/3/9— 'contemplation (Upasana) is reaching by the mind using the guidance of the intellect something delineated by the Upanishads, concentrating on it, uninterrupted by other thoughts, until identity with that thing is imagined in the same degree in which identity is imagined by us with the physical body now'.

The main emphasis of contemplation is on refining and sharpening a person's instruments of perception and tuning the mind so that it can perceive the reality behind the facade of variety, a facade which might be illusionary. It is looking inwards in order to grasp the nature of activity going on in the mind-intellect complex. Further, the Katha Upanishad clearly specifies the need for contemplation by saying, 'a rare person who can exercise discrimination and seek immortality, turns his eyes away from worldly object and then sees the pure self residing in his bosom' (Katha Upanishad, 2/1/1). The main aim of contemplation in the spiritual sphere is to effect correspondence of the subject (the seeker)

with the object (the Atma).

The word 'meditation' in the context of the mind and intellect means, on the other hand, 'to consider thoughtfully, to revolve in the mind'. Thus, outwardly both the words appear to mean the same. Both involve concentration and focus on a subject as the main theme. But then divergence starts at this point. Contemplation is done in the mind-intellect complex of the creature. It requires little or no physical exercise or minimal focused and diligent involvement of the physical body. Contemplation requires steadfastness of mind, persistent and consistent efforts and deep attention of the mind without which focusing of it is not possible. A focused mind acquires the precision and prowess of a laser beam; it become precise and surgical, it becomes penetrating and potent. Contemplation induces the urge to explore the dimension of 'silence' as well as 'meditation'. It confers a quietness and steadiness in demeanors. It leads to spontaneous self-restraint and puts a leash on the process of verbalization which is so characteristic of a modern man and an exercise which is nothing more than a waste of his vital energy.

There are four main functions of the mind— sensing, feeling, thinking and contemplating. By sensing, the mind perceives the world around it through the medium of the sense organs and its ability to respond to stimuli through the organs of action. By feeling, the mind experiences the senses of joy and pleasures, or sorrows and pains, or love and anger. These two functions (sensing and feeling) are the job of the mind. The function of thinking is taken over by the intellect; this intellect is the boss of the mind, as it were. Whereas the mind is the clerk, the intellect is the supervisor. By thinking, the intellect, with the assistance from the mind, tries to understand and decipher the true nature of the world, the inputs of the sense organs and decides on their proper responses. Thinking relies a lot on the memory bank of the mind-intellect complex to take a decision. Finally, by contemplation, the intellect takes some time off in private and thinks deeply, intently, weighing the pros and cons of any matter which are not part of routine day to day work of the complex. Thinking therefore leads to contemplation— the intellect tries to unravel the mystery around it and so it thinks and thinks deeper and still deeper in a process we shall call contemplation.

For example, a person may learn any chapter like a parrot, but he needs to think to answer searching questions on it. Contemplation, as explained earlier, inspires him to think beyond the apparent lessons of the chapter— to search for those aspects which are just not covered in the lesson. They require further investigation, research, pondering, quest and to look ahead. It is deeper than simple thinking.

Meditation, on the other hand, is a more physical exercise involving several time-tested practical techniques such as controlling of the breath, focusing of the mind on some image, spot or sound (even music). These exercises are part of Yoga. A vagrant and agitated mind is forcefully pinned down on an object so as to calm it down. The mind, in this state, is conscious and aware of the agitations and is directing the body to calm down. The intellect is guiding the mind to calm down its agitations.

The difference between contemplation and meditation is evident here. However, it will be naive to separate them into two distinct compartments because both activities or functions overlap each other, are inter-dependent, and one unit must work in tune with the other in order to produce any viable effect. For example, we cannot say a gear and a clutch of a car are independent of each other, though strictly speaking they are so in technical terms. Without pressing the clutch, it is not possible to change the gear of the vehicle— both of them must work in harmony in order to make the car move.

Meditative practices can alter a person's health, mental state, emotions and individual identity, and provide him with calmness of mind and heart, virtuous and noble demeanors, a sense of well-being and a purpose of life. But meditation, when it is purely physical exercise, is nothing more than a therapeutic avenue for an ailing body and mind. If the ultimate aim of meditation is simply treatment of a diseased body and mind, it will have minimal spiritual value. But if the aim is self-purification then it is a potent aide to contemplation whose main objective is kindling self-identification and self-realisation. For, without self purification, self-realisation is not possible. In this aspect, they are complementary to each other.

While meditating, a person goes through four successive states of existence— the waking, the dreaming, the deep sleep and the Turiya states of consciousness. It is in the 3rd stage that the person enjoys bliss and in the 4th stage he enjoys ecstasy and beatitude as well as feels oneness with the supreme Lord.

The human mind is like an onion— layers after layers cover the central kernel. The layers of the onion are like the various Vasanas or Virittis that surround the 'Truth' of the creature. Removal of these layers exposes the kernel-like pure inner self. Meditation helps in this external removal (or cleansing) process while contemplation helps to discover the magic of the onion itself— how the kernel was formed, how the various layers formed around it, and how a new onion is brought forth from the old one. This knowledge is given not by meditation but by contemplation. The whole concept is highlighted by this simple example of the onion.

The *three Types of Meditation Techniques*:- 'No-dual' or 'Advaitic meditation varies according to temperament and aptitude of the aspirant. First there is enquiry about the self; this leads to contemplation and thence to meditation. Amongst the various meditation techniques is one known as 'Madhu Vidya' which trains the mind of the aspirant/seeker to peer and search or seek the truth beneath the coverings of various external objects. Some of these Vidyas are— *Honey Vidya (Madhu Vidya), Sun Vidya (Aditya Vidya), and Fire Vidya (Agni Vidya)*. These three form the core of such meditation practices. These focus on the relationship between the macro and microcosm. During these techniques, the aspirant/seeker seeks to identify his own core of consciousness which is the manifested form of Brahm (or a Brahm with certain attributes). Take the example of Madhu Vidya, or meditating on Honey. This Honey is used as a metaphor for sweetness, the essence of nectar of flowers, of bliss and beatitude, of joy and felicity. The seeker contemplates thus

— 'This earth is like honey for all beings, and all beings are like honey for this earth. The supreme, immortal, omniscient Soul that is at the core of the very existence of earth, and the intelligent, immortal and supreme Atma (soul) of the individual creature who lives on this earth —each of them is like the 'honey' to the other. Brahm is that Atma (soul). The Atma is the pure, conscious Self. And that is all' (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 2/5/1).

The successive steps of this *Madhu Vidya*, described in this Upanishad (Brihad Aranyak 2/5/2-2/5/19) are the following:- water, fire/energy, wind/air, Aditya/Sun, directions, moon, electric, clouds, sky/space, Dharma/righteousness, Truth, humans and the Atma—each focuses on the correlation between these individual elements at the micro level and enlarged to refer to their respective macrocosmic implication at the cosmic level. The same thread—Atma and Brahm—passes through all of them; it is the common thread which links everything in this creation.

The Madhu Vidya' was first enunciated by a Brahmin named Dadhyang Atharvan in favour of sages Ashwini Kumars (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 2/5/16-19), and then it was preached by sage Yagyavalkya to his wife Maitreyi before he took to Sanyas (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, canto 2, Brahman 5). Besides these two sages, Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 2/6/1-3 gives a long list of disciples and their learned teachers who were exponents of this 'Madhu Vidya'. The list culminates in Brahma, the creator who is also the creator of the Vedas, as the first teacher who preached it to the Viraat Purush or Vishnu at the time of creation.

The Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its canto 3, describes in detail the *Aditya Vidya* or worship of the Sun as a pitcher of honey; it is a form or branch of Madhu Vidya. As we have seen, it is a means, a metaphor or a technique to contemplate upon the supremacy of the Atma and Brahm over the rest of everything else using the Sun and Honey as symbols or mediums to grasp the meaning of the supreme, sublime, eclectic and esoteric Truth. So all aspects of Nature listed above (such as earth, water, fire, sun, moon, sky etc.) can be used separately and the metaphor of honey can be applied to each of them to explain one basic truth — and that is, the only essence worth adoring, worshipping and paying attention to, worth contemplating and meditating upon, is the 'honey' which is metaphor for the Atma at micro level, and Brahm at macro level. Chandogya Upanishad describes the most profound of this Madhu Vidya in relation to the Sun and Fire in great detail in 3/1/1-3/11/3, 3/19/1—4, 4/10/4—4/14/1.

'Aditya' or the Sun God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda— 1/41/4-6; 2/27; 8/47/14-18; 10/185; Sam Veda—395; 397; Yajur Veda—23/5; 34/54; Atharva Veda—5/3/9-10; 16/3.

The Sanskrit word for the Sun God or Aditya is Surya. This word has three connotations—viz. (i) Sarat(ha)—one how moves. This refers to the Sun because it moves constantly moves across the sky. It also refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness that makes all movement possible. (ii) Svikriti(ha)—this means one who receives and accepts. This virtue refers to the fact that all offerings offered to the fire sacrifice are done in the presence of

the Sun, and since the latter is the celestial cauldron of fire all the offerings are deemed to be offered to it. In another plane, it refers to the Jiva, the living being, who receives stimuli from the world and then accepts them and deduces that the world from where they originate is real and true. (iii) Suvrate(ha)—meaning one who shines. This is very obvious in the case of the Sun. This virtue refers to the supreme Self or supreme Consciousness that is self-illuminated and self-effulgent.

He is one of the chief Gods that sustain life. He is closely related to the Fire God; the Sun is a visible manifestation of the fire element. The sun is regarded as the 'eye' of the Viraat Purush, and at the time of creation when this Viraat Purush revealed himself as the invidual creature such as for example a cow, a horse and a man, the Sun God took up residence in the eye (refer *Aitereyo-panishad* of Rig Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 4, and Canto 2, verse nos. 3-4). He is also regarded as visible manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm (refer *Brihad Aranyaka* Upanishad, 2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9. The Sun God watched the deeds done by all the creatures (Rig Veda, 1/50/2). The Sun is like the Atma of all the creatures (*Akchu Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 1; Rig Veda, 1/115/1; Shatpath Brahman, 14/3/2/9).

The Sun is regarded as a fount of light, energy and heat from a physical perspective, and as a great treasury of knowledge and wisdom symbolised by its magnificent light and brilliant splendour. As an embodiment of this virtue of knowledge, wisdom, erudition and sagacity he has been held in high esteem and as the great teacher and preacher of eclectic knowledge pertaining to the philosophy expounded by the Upanishads. He had assumed the form of a horse and revealed the Shukla Yajur Veda to the great sage Yagyavalkya. He was also the teacher of Hanuman, said to be incarnate Wind God and Lord Shiva, and who was the great, most ardent and the wisest devotee of Lord Ram.

According to *Yoga Upanishads*, the Sun God has his symbolic presence in the naval of the body in the Nabhi Chakra or the Manipur Chakra, and as the fire element in the Mooladhar Chakra, the Swadhisthan Chakra and the Kundalini. The dynamic energy of the sun represented by its life-giving powers is revealed in the form of consciousness that flows in the Pingla Naadi, the nerve passing through the right nostril.

The *Akchu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is fully dedicated to the Sun God. It has two parts—in its Canto 1 sage Sankriti offers prayers to the Sun God, and Canto 2 contains the metaphysical and spiritual teachings of the Sun God for the benefit of the sage. The grand virtues of the Sun God have been enumerated in its Canto 1, verse no. 1 which is exclusively dedicated to his grand virtues as follows—he provides the creature with the ability to see; he lights up the world for him; he provides the creation with its life and sustains it; he moves across the sky with his army of light rays to protect the world from darkness; he personifies the three basic Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama much like Brahm; he takes the creature away from darkness representing delusions and ignorance towards light symbolising wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment; he is like the Swan—pure and immaculate; he is the bearer of life; he is the Jaatveda (one having whatever is born or created as his property; the all-possessor; one who knows everything and is known by all creation; the

word is usually applied as an epithet for the eternal fire element of which the sun is a visible manifestation and container); he is as intirinsicly valuable as molten and purified gold; he is Tapa (austerity, penace, sufferance for a noble cause) personified; he is the emperor of creation and is crowned with a glittering crown and wears an equally glittering robe consisting of rays of the sunlight; he is the son of Aditi, the mother of Gods, and he lives as 'sight' in our eyes.

Aditya or the Sun God has been repeatedly regarded by the Upanishads as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush who himself is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. For example, *Chandogya Upanishad* of Sam Veda—1/6/3, 5, 6; 1/10/7; 2/9; 2/14; 2/24/12-14; 3/1-11; 3/18; 5/13; 6/4/2 etc.; and *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda—2/1/2; 2/5/5; 3/7/9; 3/9/5; 5/15; Brahmo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda—verse no. 1, etc.

The *Taitteriya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 1, Anuvaak 1, verse no. 1, says that the Sun God is known as 'Mitra', literally meaning a friend. This is because the Sun God's benevolence and life-sustaining abilities make him a fast friend of every single living being in creation. He fosters life and is a friend of life rather than being its enemy by annihilating it. He helps the world to develop and grow as well as to acquire its stupendous magnificence and glory—refer Taitteriya Upanishad, Valli 1, Anuvaak 5, verse no. 2.

He is also known as 'Savita'—refer *Savitru-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, and *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 2 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. The name 'Aditya' is endorsed by a number of Upanishads—e.g.

He is a visible manifestation of the 'Viraat Purush'—refer *Taitteriya Upanishad*, Valli 1, Anuvaak 5, verse no. 2. He is the 'eye of the Supreme Being'—refer *Aiteriyo-panishad* of Rig Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 4, and finds his abode in the creature's eye— refer Aiteriyo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 4.

The *Naryan Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1 says that he was born from Lord Narayan, i.e. Lord Vishnu. The same thing is asserted in *Brahmo-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1 which states that Aditya, the Sun God, is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu. But this is understandable because Vishnu and the Viraat Purush is the same Lord having different names according to the degree of subtlety and the scriptural text one is referring to; both are synonymously used. Whereas the Viraat Purush was the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm that appeared in the first stage of creation when Brahm decided to initiate it, he was called Vishnu at a little later stage when the visible creation was just about to be initiated, because it is from Vishnu that Brahma the creator was born who later gave shape to the creation itself.

The *Agni Vidya* pertains to the worshipping of the holy fire. The Vaishwanar Fire (Agni)—The legendary 'fire element' has a very prominent place in the scriptures. The Fire God or Agni appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 4/5; 5/1; 6/7-9; 7/1, 3-6; 12-13; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; 12/1-122 etc.; in Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; in Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; 7/24; 18/72 etc.; and in Atharva Veda—6/119; 8/3; 12/3.

The word Vaishwanar Agni refers to the eternal fire which burns in the cosmos in a subtle and imperceptible form to keep the flame of life inherently and constantly burning. It

represents the 'consciousness' factor of the creation; the 'warmth' of fire is a sign of life whereas 'cold' is a harbinger of and synonym with death. Amongst the five elements created at the time of creation (earth, water, fire, air, space), it is the fire which is the only element which has energy, heat, light, splendour, dazzle and radiance. The water will be nothing else but ice and of no use to the creature without fire as far as its ability to harbour and sustain life is concerned. Similarly, the earth would freeze cold and covered with a thick sheet of ice were it not for the eternal fire burning inside it, even under the ocean bed covered to the brim with water which acts as an antidote to fire. This very fact shows that the Supreme Lord is active in the fire and prevents it from being doused by water because the Lord needs it to sustain life as much as he needs the water. Further, without heat there will be no seasons, no currents, no movements in the air. There will be no formation of clouds and there will be no rainfall in the absence of heat. In brief, the vital spark of life in this world is represented by the 'fire element', hence, it is called the 'Lord of the Vishwa', or Lord Vaishwanar. This fire element derives its vitality, stamina, energy and potentials from Brahm.

According to *Maitrenyu Upanishad*, canto 2, verse no.8 of the Sam Veda tradition, this Vaishwanar is the fire present in the living creature giving it the vital energy to digest the food eaten by it.

Since the Fire God was the first born amongst the various Gods, he was called 'Agni', meaning the one who comes first, one who precedes others. It is the inherent 'fire' element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures (Kaushitaki Brahmin, 4/3; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 9, verse no.1). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahman, 148/10/1).

The Fire God is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahman, 6/1/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has 7 tongues representing the 7 colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda, 1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedus, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpat, Matrishwa and Naraashansha. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

According to some texts, the fire element has three legendary forms—viz. the 'Agni', which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the 'Jatvedas', which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and 'Vaishwanar', which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihadevtakaar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

According to others texts, the holy fire has five forms elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13. They are the following— (a) 'Garhyapatya' (गार्हपत्य—the fire of the household hearth), (b) 'Dakshinagni' (दक्षिणाग्नि—the fire used as a witness

to making charities or any other religious festivity), (c) 'Ahavaniya' (आह्वनीय—the fire to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (सभ्य—the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit) and (e) 'Awasathya' (आवसथ्य—the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 2, section 24, while canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The Garhyapatya fire—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The Dakshinagni fire—This is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest for of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

The Ahawaniya fire—This is lit to invoke Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

The following are also regarded as the five fires— (i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightening, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

Samvartak Agni—Samvartak Agni refers to the fire that engulfs the earth at the time of dooms-day, because the word 'Samvartak' means the end or conclusion of an era or a period of time, and Agni means fire. It also has two other connotations—viz. (1) The dooms-day cloud, because at the time of conclusion of one cycle of creation and destruction there is torrential rain which causes a deluge that drown the entire habitation on the surface of the earth. In this scenario, only certain forms of aquatic life survive, and from it the seed of the next cycle of creation is sown. (2) The fire burning under the bed of the ocean and in the bowls of the earth which keeps the water of the ocean as well as the underground springs warm. This

fire is called 'Badvaanal'. In the present verse, this fire has been personified as the sage who first conceptualised this Upanishad.

To conclude we may say that all these concepts--Madhu Vidya, Aditya Vidya and Agni Vidya--are inter-dependent. All have to work in sync with each other to help the creature realise its may aim in life which, spiritually speaking, is the end of the cycle of birth and death, and of the final liberation from this world and merger with the parent source from where the soul of the creature had originally originated from— the Brahm, the universal spirit, the ultimate reality and the absolute truth.

Benefits of Meditation and contemplation:—We can say that meditation and contemplation are the two legs of spiritualism. Meditation prepares and trains the mind to contemplate. Contemplation helps the mind to meditate. It is a symbiotic relationship. The object of both these exercises is to determine the true identity of the Atma or the spirit residing in the bosom of the creature and the truth about ourselves and our surroundings. Both discipline the mind and unleash the tremendous potential of it. At the worldly plane, the benefits are the achievement of success in the field of 'Artha' (prosperity and well-being) and 'Kaam' (fulfillment of desires), at a higher plane it is success in 'Dharma' (righteousness, nobility of thought and conduct) and at a still higher level, it provides success in spiritual elevation to a state of contentedness, bliss, tranquility, beatitude, peace and happiness. The ultimate state of emancipation and salvation is the final trophy to be won. In mere physical terms, they help to maintain a healthy body and mind, a sharp intellect and a superior wisdom; they calm the body and brain which no medication can possibly do. These bestow honour and respect to its practitioner in the society, and make his life worthwhile.

The **necessary requirements**, or shall we say, qualities needed for contemplation to be successful, are the following— (i) restraining the external organs of actions and internal organs of perception. Reflection is only possible when there is silence and calmness. That is why the lesson learnt by a student during early morning hours are better grasped by him because the atmosphere is calm.

The other necessities are— (ii) Tapa i.e. austerity, or diligence and industry without which any endeavour will fail. (iii) Swadhaya, i.e. self study of scriptures. Now this study does not mean learning by rote like a parrot, but it must be with understanding. (iv) Brahmcharya, i.e. celibacy. Here again, both physical celibacy as well as mental celibacy are needed. The former helps to preserve vital energy while the latter helps to keep agile and focus the brain. (v) Nidhidhyaasan, i.e. intense reflection, for this helps to unravel the truth and solve the mystery. (vi) Sradhaa, i.e. faith, belief and conviction. Here it refers to shying away from doubts, confusions, cynicism and undue pricking holes. (vii) Humility, i.e. lack of pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness; this will make the seeker receptive to new ideas.

Brahm is obtainable by a purified intellect. Contemplation and meditation is a means to purify it.

(11) Spirituality can be defined in this context as the elevation of the mind from a lower level of thinking to a higher level of thinking. The dictionary defines 'spirit' as 'a vital principle, the principle of thought, the soul/Atma present in the creature, an incorporeal being, the essence or chief element, a breath of wind or life'. Hence, spiritualism means 'to realise that nothing is real except the spirit/soul/Atma; the latter is a real entity and not something out of imagination, it has a real existence apart from matter'. So, spiritualism is to focus the mind away from the faulty and delusory world and concentrate it on more important things about the Truth and essence of existence. It is an intellectual exercise, an awakening of the mind, as it were. And its tool is contemplation more than meditation.

A person who meditates and contemplates is actually a student and practitioner of spiritualism. This student not only wishes to become a graduate but aims further ahead to become a post graduate, and still ahead to doing his doctoral thesis, that is rise higher and higher in pursuit of his chosen line of education. As the saying goes, 'a mango tree laden with ripe fruits bends towards the earth', such a person becomes humbler by the day; all his ego, pride and haughtiness gives way to humility, love and compassion. He becomes serene, calm, peaceful, dispassionate and detached. His mind is purified; it becomes subtle but razor sharp. He becomes a 'saint'.

Constant practice, constant study, constant reflection and constant concentration are the four pillars leading to self-realisation and enlightenment. Therefore, both mediation and contemplation are followed by erudite ascetics, sages and seers even as two legs are needed by the body to walk properly.

Constant contemplation and meditation brings about a change in the personality of a man. In as much as the mind is involved in concentration and focusing of attention, whether in the realm of contemplation or meditation, the changes in the body's chemicals, physiology and electrical impulses emanating from the brain which can be duly recorded by EEG (electro encephalogram), indicate a positive trend. It has been scientifically proved that during meditation, the alpha-wave amplitude is increased. Similarly, the theta-wave activity in the front portion of the brain is also enhanced during contemplation. The increase of alpha and theta wave activities produces calmness, relaxation and loss of anxiety.

Meditation induces electrical harmony between the two lobes of the brain and improves bodily response to stressful situations as measured by heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate etc. Meditation also affects the biochemical equilibrium in the body for the betterment of the meditator— there is a reduced blood lactate levels (ensuring better transport of oxygen to all tissues), decreased cortisol (reducing stress) and cholesterol levels (reducing the chances of clogged arteries and veins) as well as an increase in high-density lipoprotein (which protect against heart disease).

While contemplation has more to do with the 'thinking' process, meditation is more akin to the 'concentration' process of the brain. Whereas the brain might think but this thinking has to be aided by concentration to have any long term affects. Therefore, instead of at being opposite to each other, both of these are supplementary and

complementary. Once the brain decides to think (contemplate), it uses concentration (meditation) techniques to succeed in its efforts.

*Three Steps to Truth***:-**Vedanta philosophy says that there are three steps to realise the Truth— (i) 'Sravan' or hearing about the truth, (ii) 'Manan' or contemplation upon the truth, focusing the mind on it, and (iii) 'Nidhidhyaasan' or meditation upon it.

(12) Dhyan:-The Sanskrit word Dhyan means 'to think or to cogitate'. Here it means both contemplation as well as meditation. The word also means 'attention, focus'. So, this word is generally understood in common parlance to be similar to contemplation and meditation, and it covers both the terms in its ambit.

The appropriate word for contemplation in Hindi would be 'Manan and Chintan' which will roughly mean 'deep thought, reflection, pondering and application of mind'. The Upanishads stress on this 'Chintan-manan' aspect of the mind-intellect when it talks about 'Dhyan'. Greatest of scientific discoveries were made more by intuition than anything else. That is why intuition is closely related to the so-called 'sixth sense' in a man, i.e. a state when the intuitive man knows what is the correct path to chose from a variety of options, and more often than not, he is correct. We can say that this 'intuition' is the guidance provided by the subtle soul/Atma of the creature. Not everybody is equally intuitive by nature; this is because some persons, by virtue of their past actions and deeds have a thicker layer of Vasanas and Vrittis surrounding their Atma while others have a thinner layer so that the voice coming out of the Atma is easily heard in the latter case while it is muzzled and suppressed in the former case.

Definition of Dhyan:- Patanjali Yogsutra has described 'Dhyan' as concentration. Dhyan is that state in which the inner mind tries to see the reality behind things. This 'thinking' process links it with contemplation while concentration function links it with meditation. According to Agni Puran, contemplation with a calm mind is Dhyan while Garud Puran has defined it as concentration on the Brahm. Dhyan, therefore, leads to enlightenment. Woodworth, in his book 'Psychology', writes that the mind concentrates on one impulse at a time and neglects others. So, Dhyan in this context means 'to become alert and activated for doing a work or seeing an object exclusively'. Dhyan is momentary in the beginning, but it becomes permanent later on with practice. Sidney Smith defines Dhyan as 'to forget everything else except the main objective'. Charles Dickens views Dhyan as 'useful, harmless, definite and a beneficial process of the mind'. According to Bergansa, 'suppression of external distractions is essential for the deepening expansion of Dhyan'. Edgar Casey says that 'Dhyan brings to the fore the latent powers of creativity in a person. This creativity improves and enriches his physical, mental and spiritual aspects'. John White in his renowned work 'The meeting of science and spirit' has enumerated many benefits of Dhyan— promotion of physical health, reduction of tension, anxiety and aggressiveness, it leads to self realisation and self improvement and development. He further says that the benefit of meditation are the following— feeling of tranquility, freedom,

reduction of tiredness and depression, relief from pains, increase in positive traits such as sympathy and empathy for others, believe in divinity and purity of self etc. Michael Murphy and Steven Donavan, in their research work titled 'The physical and psychological effects of meditation' have mentioned that meditation/Dhyan helps to regulate and control electrical and chemical activity of the brain, the rhythm of the heart, regulates blood pressure, the skin's ability to resist infection and it regulates general metabolism.

Sankaracharya has explained that the many Vedic rituals such as sacrifices had been transformed as mental concepts for contemplation and meditation by Chandogya Upanishad because any defect in the performance of a ritual according to the Vedas, however small and inconsequential, could devaluate and derail the whole process. Further, elaborate rituals required huge preparation and expenditure. So he prescribed that meditation was far better, safer and surer means of attaining the same benefits that elaborate sacrifices offered. Contemplation and mediation are equally efficient in spiritual pursuit of the aspirant. Nevertheless, the former (contemplation) has intellect and mind as its main focus while the latter (meditation) concentrates on the mind and body to be effective. Sacrifices, as compared to them, are merely physical rituals.

As is evident, the chariot moves in the proper direction when all the horses are controlled simultaneously. So a holistic and an all-inclusive, well synchronized and homogenous approach is needed by a seeker/aspirant to attain success in his endeavour to get liberation and deliverance from the horrible torments agitating him as well as to attain emancipation and salvation for its soul from this world.

The terms contemplation, meditation, Yoga, Upasana (worship) and spiritualism are inter-related but subtle differences do exist between them. A simple way to understand the difference is this— (i) Yoga is akin to physical training class in a school. A teacher teaches any number of students various methods to attune the body. (ii) Meditation is the next class where mere physical exercises are upgraded to harness the mind, to train it to focus on any specific subject and stop its inherent wayward trait. In this aspect, Yoga and meditation overlap. Meditation brings all the benefits of Yoga with the bonus of spiritual elevation of the mind. Once the mind's agitations are controlled, it begins to 'think, to ponder' on matters more important for life. Since the desire for peace, bliss and tranquility, for understanding 'who I really am' is inherent in all the creatures, the next logical step is (iii) contemplation. When a man's eyes turn inwards (rather than trying to focus on an external symbol or idol as done in meditation) and he begins to examine himself, he finds that the 'true self' is hidden in his bosom, in his heart's core (Taiteriya Upanishad, 2/1). This 'self' is attained by those whose mind is clean and scrubbed of all scum represented by extrovert tendencies, and instead made sharp, subtle and concentrated (Katha Upanishad, 1/3/12). This Atma is attained by unrelenting practice of truthfulness, austerity, right knowledge and continence (Mundak Upanishad, 3/1/5).

(13) Upasana:-The worship or adoration of the 'Truth' is called Upasana. This worship can be of a chosen deity or of the pure self. This worship embraces both meditation and contemplation because the worshipper physically and consciously focuses his attention unwaveringly on his object of worship, hence it is meditation, and thinks deeply about the ways to attain his object of worship, hence contemplation.

The evolution of human psychology from the humdrum and mundane to higher plane of thought and discrimination is the aim of spirituality and the reward is divinity and self realisation. Therefore, spirituality is centered and established around the theme of Atma/soul which is the pure conscious Spirit residing in the creature.

Thus we see that the discriminating intellect has a major role to play in contemplation because it helps to guide the mind to wade through a sea of knowledge, select what it needs and separate the essence from the clutter, to discriminate between what is 'the real truth' and what is only 'the apparent truth'. It eggs the mind on to reach the final conclusion. Thus, whereas meditation is an important tool for a contemplative life, the latter is more intuition based; it relies heavily on the laboratory of the intellect more than the mind to achieve its purpose.

Now let us have a brief glance at the obstacles in mediation and contemplation. There are four chief types— (i) physiological obstacles such as hunger, thirst, sleep etc. They can be controlled by practice and self-restraint. (ii) The inherent tendency of the mind and the body to go towards pleasing objects and to resist control. This is called the Vasanas and Vrittis of the creature. Perseverance and persistence is needed here. Gentle prodding and cajoling of the mind and disciplining of the body are needed also. (iii) Our own mistakes such as carelessness, disorganized life, overdoing or indulgences in routine matters. The best way to overcome these is moderation. A gradual disciplining is needed here. (iv) The presence of uncertainties and lack of proper guidance. Here the scriptures help.

The obstacles have been described by Patanjali in his 'Yog Sutra' as follows— (i) disease, mental laziness and lethargy, doubt, delusions and erroneous perceptions, lack of enthusiasm, attraction and attachment towards gratification of sense organs and their worldly objects, dithering and falling when the goal is almost at hand, grief, distresses of the body, irregular breathing and non-retention of concentration (Patanjali Yog Sutra, 2/31).

The four obstacles described by Acharya Gaupada in his celebrated Vedanta treatise called 'Mandukya Karika' are the following— (i) Laya (state of mental dullness, lack of concentration and even sleep). (ii) Vikshep (restlessness of mind, agitations). (iii) Kashaya (entering of the mind into a stupefied state). (iv) Rasavada (the joy of meditation). The 1st obstacle 'Laya' can be removed by keeping the mind active and agile by proper and regulated life. The 2nd obstacle 'Vikshepa' can be dealt with by forcibly driving away the agitation-causing thoughts from the mind. The 3rd obstacle 'Kashaya' is caused by intense attachment or even aversion to the materialistic world and its objects. The remedy here is to draw the mind away from the world and consciously cultivate noble thoughts. The 4th

obstacle 'Rasavada' is a temporary feeling of joy by the seeker. He must stick to his path and not let this temporary joy to overcome his aim of permanence in joy.

According to Yoga doctrines, there are five hindrances— (i) Avidya (ignorance), (ii) Asmita (ego, pride and haughtiness), (iii) Raag (attachment, infatuation), (iv) Dwesha (aversion, malice, ill-will, jealously envy) and (v) Abhinivesh (clinging to life).

(14) Mukti:-The word Mukti, put simply, means 'liberation and deliverance'. For example, when a person is in a difficult situation, he yearns for freedom from his torments, and once he gets it, he says that he has got Mukti or liberation from his torments, that is, he is delivered from a hellish situation.

How does one get true Mukti or Moksha from this world and the cycle of birth and death?

The physical world is mortal and gross; it is entangling and web-like. No one will be eternal here but still everyone wishes to get involved in it and enjoy its pleasures and comforts for eternity. Birth and death in this world are invariably associated with uncountable horrors and pains of great enormity, but still the creature wishes to take a new birth to fulfill his yet unfulfilled desires and complete the leftover tasks, as well as to enjoy the world more.

From the metaphysical perspective, the creature who is born must die, but death is not the actual end to his miseries, for he has to take birth again. This is called the cycle of birth and death, and it goes on and on endlessly. The reason of this cycle continuing is that the foolish creature thinks that the body is his true self and identity, and that the world is something real. So he gets involved in doing numerous deeds, deriving pleasures from their rewards or suffering from their consequences, then doing something more and new, and the cycle continues. He also has countless desires and ambitions which he wishes to fulfill; he wishes to acquire name and fame and wealth for instance. This is regardless of the fact that none of them will sustain him for long.

Horrors of birth and death are experienced by the creature first hand, but their recollection is extremely short-lived. The creature forgets about them so soon that he is neither able to describe them to others, nor remember them long enough to remind himself of the miseries suffered at that time. So, being short in memory, when he comes in contact with the charms and temptations of this world of material sense objects, he gets enticed and attracted to it, forgetting at that time that this same involvement had led to his taking birth again at the time of shedding his earlier body in his previous life. In this, the gross organs of his body play an active role because they have an innate tendency to get attracted towards their respective objects in this world. It's a formidable bondage; a shackle difficult to break free from.

The real freedom from this cycle comes when the soul, the subtle Atma, the ethereal Spirit that is the truthful 'self' of the creature, frees its self from the bondage of the body in which it lives in any given birth, and disassociates its self from the surrounding world. This means that the creature does not allow his inner 'truthful self' to get involved with anything the body does in this world. He also stops yearning for the material sense objects of the gross

physical world from which he expects to derive sustainable comfort and pleasure when he becomes wise with the knowledge that all such things merely create an illusion of comfort and pleasure because in reality they themselves are artificial, temporary and perishable.

With acquisition of spiritual wisdom and the dawn of enligthenement on the horizon of a person's intellectual mind, he comes to understand that the involvement with the gross world and identifying oneself with the equally gross body are the two prominent reasons for being forced to remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Until this wisdom has made a creature wise, he had allowed himself to be trapped in the vicious cycle of doing various deeds in order to fulfill the desires of his mind and the demands of the body (which he had erroneously regarded as his true self). Each deed of his resulted in producing some result for which only he is responsible. In accordance to the simple law of Nature that every action has a corresponding reaction, he gets sucked in a vortex of doing deeds, then either enjoying or suffering from their consequences, then making new efforts to either enhancing his source of enjoyment, pleasure and comfort, or doing something to overcome his sufferings, and this cycle continues. Then suddenly death comes, descending upon him from the blue—and he leaves the body and the world most reluctantly. We must remember here that this applies to the ignorant creature who thinks that the gross physical body is his 'true self', instead of the subtle Atma.

But when the same man beomes wise, self-realised and enlightened, he understands that his 'truthful self' is not the body but the Atma which is pure consciousness, which is an ethereal Spirit that is separate from the body as well as the world, and which is a fraction or a reflection of the Supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram. Once this happens, the creature does not accumulate any consequences of the deeds done by the body—simply because the doer now is not the Atma, which is his truthful self, but the body which is a separate entity. It is the body that would either enjoy or suffer from the deeds done by it, without affecting the Atma at all. Therefore, the Atma is not affected by the law of Karma (deeds) which states that one is bound by the result of his actions.

Besides this, a wise person knows that the world is artificial and deluding, so it is best to avoid its illusionary charms and traps. How can one expect to quench his thirst by running behind a mirage in a hot desert? Therefore, such a man stops harbouring desires and having lust for the material objects of this world. No desires means there is no need to fulfill them.

Since new birth directly depends upon the cumulative effects of the deeds done by a creature in the current life as well as the hoard of unfulfilled desires that he has at the instant of the physical death of his body, a wise creature who has become self-realised and enlightened about his truthful identity as being the ethereal Atma instead of the gross physical would have neither of the burdens (of deeds and desires) on him at the time of shedding the gross body, which he nevertheless knows is perishable and destined to die.

So he dies peacefully, and his Atma, his ethereal soul, merges with the cosmic Soul, instead of searching for a new slot to enter into and come back to this world. This results in his finding Mukti or liberation and deliverance.

On the other hand, the ignorant creature who was neck-deep involved in the body and the world would be assigned a new body and take a birth depending upon two factors—one is the past deeds done by him, and the other is the hoard of unfulfilled desires needed to be taken care of.

Basically there are said to be three types of Muktis—viz. Jivan, Videha and Kaivalya. The following list summarises the Upanishads that deal with these three varieties of Muktis.

(1) Jivan Muktii—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 2; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6, 15, 42, Canto 4, verse no. 1, 21-35, 18-33, 42-43, Canto 5, verse no. 56, 59, 75-76; Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 79-80, and Canto 3, verse no. 33; Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 12-13, and Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 4, 6-15; Akchu-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 32-39; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-32; Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 46-47, 144, 151, 161. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, canto 3, verse no. 5, and canto 3, verse no. 9-11; canto 4, verse no. 6; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 12 and 43-47; Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2; Shatyayani Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 19. (c) Sam Veda—Mahopanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 37-73. (d) Atharva Veda—Ram Rahasaya Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 11-17; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2, especially verse no. 27; Canto 3, especially verse no. 2; Canto 4, especially verse nos. 17, 52, 58-59; Canto 5, verse nos. 5-6, 91-108; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-12; Atma Upanishad, verse nos. 10-20.

(2) Videha Muktii—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 34; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81; Sarwasaro-panishad, verse no. 2; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 12, and Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15; Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2; Shatyayani Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 19. (c) Sam Veda—Mahopanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 36-73, and Canto 5, verse nos. 23-41. (d) Atharva Veda—Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 15; full Canto 4, especially verse nos. 15, 53; Atma Upanishad, verse nos. 21-25.

(3) Kaivalya Muktii—It has been described in (a) Shukla Yajur Veda tradition—Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 7-8 and 15; Muktiko-panishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 13, verse no. 1, and Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, Brahman 2, section 3, verse no. 1; Brahman 3, section 2. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15, 103-106; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-15, 17-18; Sarva-saar Upanishad, Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 15. (c) Atharva Veda—Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse nos. 9-11, 19-22; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15, 1st half, paragraph no. 17, last stanza; Canto 6, paragraph no. 22; Canto 8, paragraph no. 6, paragraph no. 19 last stanza; Atma Upanishad, verse nos. 23-25.

(4) Sayujya Muktii—Atharva Veda's Tripadvibhut Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-17; Canto 6, paragraph no. 22; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 6-7, 17, 19, 22.

While discussing this specialised form of Mukti, this Upanishad also describes the eclectic concept of Mukti in a comprehensive form in parapraph nos. 4-13 of Canto 5.

The *Atma Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse nos. 23-25, describes what is the true meaning of Mukti, especially the Videha Mukti, and differentiates between its two types, viz. 'Kaivalya Videha Mukti' and 'Videha Mukti'. Now let us see what these verses say on the subject—

"verse nos. 23-25 = A person who is fully Brahm-realised and truly enlightened becomes one with Brahm, he becomes a personification of Brahm when all extraneous factors and gross considerations are eliminated.

Just like two separate samples of milk, oil and water become one and indistinguishable from one another when these two samples are mixed together, the condition of a self-realised ascetic who has experienced the Atma and who knows the truth of the Atma as well as his own 'self' is also the same. That is, there is no distinction left between him and his conscious Atma. His 'true identity' is no longer the physical gross body, but the pure consciousness known as the Atma.

Having attained this eclectic and most exalted spiritual state of existence when he has risen above the limitations imposed by the gross body, and stops being known or identified by the virtue of his gross body, the self-realised and Brahm-realised aspirant is said to have attained Videha Mukti which is equivalent to Kaivalya Mukti. Videha Mukti is freedom of the 'self' known as the Atma from the fetters of the gross body known as the Deha. Kaivalya Mukti is so-called because it is a unique and matchless form of liberation and deliverance in the sense that when this sort of Mukti is obtained there is no fear or chance of ever getting trapped and shackled again. It is final emancipation and salvation of the soul. A person who obtains Kaivalya Mukti as a result of Videha Mukti does not have to take birth again in this world[1].

All forms of Avidya (delusions and ignorance) that act as causes which result in re-birth are burnt by him in the fire of knowledge and enlightenment that comes with realisation of the Atma, the pure consciousness (23-25).

[Note—[1]It is like the case of the air present inside the clay pitcher merging with the outer air when the pitcher is actually broken. Even if the earlier air, known as the Ghatakash, tries its best to go inside the pitcher once again, it would not be successful for the simple reason that the pitcher no longer exists as it has been broken. But a hypothetical situation exists when it can be said that this Ghatakash can enter another pitcher if it is very eager to remain trapped inside one when it finds residence in some new pitcher being moulded by the potter. So we come to a very interesting conclusion here—we have two types of Videha Muktis—one which is 'Kaivalya Videha Mukti' as outlined in this verse above, and the other is simply 'Videha Mukti' as symbolized by the Ghatakash entering another newly moulded pitcher.

The metaphysical import is obvious—a wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised person discards this gross body with total renunciation and detachment from both the world and the body and the countless temptations they offer. Such a man obtains 'Kaivalya Videha Mukti'. On the other hand, if he has some desires left, even auspicious ones such as

self-less service or studying the scriptures or doing charitable work, he would be inclined to take a new birth to fulfill his desires and unfinished tasks. Then he would be heading towards only 'Videha Mukti' by discarding the gross body at the time of death. Since he had been doing auspicious and noble deeds during his lifetime, and has noble intentions and desires, he would take a high and noble birth, and in his new life would be a torch-bearer for the rest of the society, but it would not be the termination of his journey through the cycle of birth and death.]

(5) The Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition describes the difference between Jivan Mukti and Videha Mukti has been elucidated in Canto 4, verse nos. 14, 17-19. However, Canto 3, verse no. 2 outlines the similarity between them at a certain plane of spiritual existence. Now let us examine these verses to see how they differentiate and draw a parallel between these two types of Muktis.

Difference between Jivan and Videha Muktis—"Canto 4, verse nos. 14, 17-19 = There are two forms in which the Chitta (the mind and sub-conscious) is controlled or restrained or tamed—one is known as 'Sarup' and the other as 'Arup'.

[The literal meaning of the term 'Sarup' is to have a physical form and shape, something that has a definite contour and describable attributes, and 'Arup' is the opposite of Sarup.]

The state of existence known as 'Jivan Mukti' (i.e. to be spiritually free inspite of being alive and having a physical gross body) is an instance of the Chitta that is controlled or tamed but has a 'Sarup' form.

On the other hand, the state of existence known as 'Videha Mukti' (i.e. to be spiritually free from the bondage of the physical gross body) is an instance of the Chitta that is controlled or tamed but has a 'Arup' form.

[In the case of Jivan Mukti where the aspirant is enlightened about the reality of the body and the world as well as his true 'self', the mind and sub-conscious are deemed to be tamed and controlled when he does not get mentally involved in either the activities of the body or the charms of the material sense objects of the world. He lives a life that is outwardly normal, but internally he is completely detached from everything and every situation. His mind is active only to the extent that is needed for the man to do the work at hand, but that is all. The mind is so detached from the word itself that it does not remember what was done a moment ago. It is a 'Sarup' form of tamed Chitta because outwardly the man's deeds and actions do not show it, and the body is very much active and alive. Such a man might even wash daily and take normal care of the body as required of him, but his interest ends there—he does not hanker for the body's gratification or pampering. Therefore, the state of neutrality of the mind shows in his actions. Hence it has a 'Sarup'. Again, this mind is rudimentarily aware of the body which has a form, hence it is 'Sarup'.

The second sort of tamed Chitta is 'Arup' that comes with 'Videha Mukti'. In the latter case, the aspirant is not even aware that the body exists—for instance he may not bathe for days but would be unaware of this fact; he would stand in hot sun but would not be conscious of heat. The word 'Videha' also means without a physical body, hence it refers to

the state of transcendent existence when the spirit leaves the gross physical body. Obviously, the consciousness in this state is 'Arup' because it has no form. Since it is the mind and the sub-conscious that makes a man aware of the world around him, there is little difference between the term 'consciousness' as it is applied to the Atma or the true 'self' of the man, and when it is applied to the 'awareness of anything' that the mind and the sub-conscious create for the man. Hence, when the awareness of the body is absent, the Chitta is said to exist in an Arup form.] (14).

A man who has overcome even good Vasanas (natural passions and desires related to the world; attachments and attractions for the material things and sense objects of the world) such as having the mental tendency to be friendly towards all is deemed to have become 'Jivan Mukta'.

[This means that to be actually free from this world and its entangling effects even while living in it—i.e. to obtain Jivan Mukti—one need to develop total neutrality, completed dispassion and non-attachment. It is not merely sufficient to get rid of bad habits and thoughts, or avoiding unrighteous and inauspicious deeds and actions, and instead inculcating noble virtues such as being friendly, compassionate and graceful towards all others. One must avoid all involvement with the world at large in any manner whatsoever if one seeks to obtain true freedom from its entanglements.

This is very evident. If being unfriendly would make a man face hostility from the world, being friendly would invite a large company, and in both the cases his calm, serenity, peace and quietude would be compromised.]

A man is said to have attained Jivan Mukti when he does not have to take repeated births.

[In this context the advice of abandoning even the tendency of being friendly towards all assumes a different connotation. When one is friendly, he develops close relationship with the people around him. It creates a bond between him and them. The individual is becomes concerned about the pains and sorrows of others, and though it is an excellent character trait on its own but it nevertheless creates a lot of mental dismay and misery for the person when he watches others in pain. Therefore his own peace of mind is disturbed, and a disturbed mind cannot allow him to live him in peace. He gets entangled indirectly in the chain of unintentional sorrows and pains.

Similarly, when he sees his friends happy he 'shares' their joy, he enjoys with them. This again creates involvement.

No true 'Mukti' or freedom is achievable with any conditions attached. Being 'friendly' is one such condition. It creates its own shackling effect. Hence, a man who wishes to break free from the chain of birth and death must avoid even being friendly to anyone or towards anything in this world. He must treat all with equal detachment and neutrality. This would ensure that he is not bound to anything or anyone. A life that is lived with total and exemplary aloofness and detachment, with no involvement with the world whatsoever, is said to be Jivan Mukta.] (17).

The apparent sign and the evident form that elimination of the Mana (mind) takes is called Jivan Mukti, while its subtle form or aspect and its sign is called Videha Mukti.

[When the mind becomes neutral and totally un-involved in the affairs of the world, the behaviour of the person would show his state of mind. This is the mind's 'visibly neutral form'. The detachment, dispassion and non-interest that a wise, erudite, enlightened and self-realised man displays are evident sign of his neutral and controlled state of mind.

On the other hand, the fact that inspite of living in this world and going about his life normally, doing his duties and living up to his obligations, answering questions and managing his affairs routinely, he still remains engrossed internally in perpetual meditation and contemplation at all times, externally appearing to be awake but internally asleep or indifferent to the world, is indicative of his 'invisible and subtle state' of the mind. Such a man remains perpetually in a blissful and contented state inspite of all the turmoil that surrounds him outside.] (18).

Surely, the Atma that is independent of the body and with all its involvements is called 'Videha Mukta'.

[The word 'Videha' literally means one without a gross body, and 'Mukta' means to be free. Hence the phrase 'Videha Mukta' truly applies to a wise, enlightened and self-realised man who has realised that the Atma, the pure consciousness that is his 'true self', is independent of the body. The larger import of this understanding is that such a man need not die to actually free his 'self' from the body. He can do this even while alive—by breaking the link between the Atma and the body. A bonded man is one who erroneously thinks that his body is his 'self' and the Atma is just some part of the body that lives in the subtle heart, but a wise and enlightened man thinks that the 'self' is not the body but the pure consciousness known as the Atma that is independent of the body. For the man with the latter eclectic thoughts, the presence of the body is as external to his 'true self' as any third person.

Hence, true Videha Mukti does not necessarily mean leaving the body physically, but leaving it at the mental level and subtle level by completely disassociating one's self with it. When this grand state of existence is reached, no difference really exists between 'Jivan Mukti' and 'Videha Mukti'.]

As a result, all the different virtues and numerous characteristics that define this material world and the gross body become irrelevant, and only the 'truth' remains.

[That is why a realised and enlightened man stays quiet and poised inspite of being witness to such a colourful world and constant nagging by the body for self gratification. It is because this wise man has understood the false and entrapping nature of the world along with the fact that the body is the cause of all his entanglements with the world, and so it is best to neglect its provocations.] (19)."

Similarity between Jivan and Videha Muktis—"Canto 3, verse no. 2 = The living being who bears the gross body and lives in it is distinct from the gross body in which he lives. But unfortunately a creature might (under the influence of delusions and ignorance) think them to be one and the same—i.e. he might erroneously believe that the gross body and the living entity that resides in it are the same.

This situation when the creature believes that the gross body is his 'self' is called 'Sanga'—because the creature has attached himself to the body, making it his identity and an inseparable part, because with this identification they are deemed to be one, and because the result is that the creature loses his independence in the form of the pure conscious Atma that is separate and distinct from the gross body, but instead allows himself to be an inseparable and integral part of the gross body. In short, the creature keeps constant company ('Sanga') of the gross body.

Since all relations and contacts with this world are limited to the body and created by the body, since it is the body that lives in the world and keeps constant contact with it, such a creature (who thinks that his body is his 'self') is said to be in the company of the gross world. [This is the sign of the Atma that is bound to the body and the world; the Atma that is not free.] (2)."

(6) The three paths of Mukti have been described in Advai Tarak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 4-13.

(7) The relationship between Mukti and Gyan has been succinctly described in Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 5; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 14-18. (b) Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse nos. 1-2, 5-10.

(8) The relationship between Mukti and selfless service and devotion for the supreme Brahm has been clearly described in Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse nos. 1-2, 5-10.

(9) How the Atma escapes from the body through the Brahm-Randhra along with the Pran to provide Muksha to the aspirant is graphically described in Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15, 1st half.

(10) The concept of 'Bandha' or being fettered in shackles have been described in Shukla Yajur Veda's Niralamba Upanishad, verse no. 18-28; Mandal Brahman, Brahman 5.

(11) The term Moksha refers to the final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the creature's soul. It has been described in the Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse nos. 56, 61-64, 114.

The Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 56 describes how Moksha is obtained as follows—"Only if such Vasanas are not done away with that the creature is impelled or compelled to get entangled in this world. [It is because if he has lingering traces of Vasanas, he would strive to seek fulfillment of his hidden desires and satisfaction of his passions by getting involved in the material world and its mundane activities. And obviously this would tie the Atma to the gross body or compel it to surrender its inherent independence to the body, because without the body it is not possible to gratify or please the Vasanas.]

Therefore, to get proper and complete rid of the Vasanas is called 'Moksha'—or true liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the creature's 'self' (56)."

In spiritual realm, Mukti has different connotations for the two main schools of Hindu philosophy—the Advaita and the Dvaita. The Advaita school of thought, as the name suggests, means 'non-duality' while Dvaita means 'duality'. The Advaita school's belief, inter alia, is that the soul of the creature is one with the supreme Soul called Brahm. This is an eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent absolute entity. It is the ultimate truth and reality. Hence, Mukti in this context means the individual soul of the creature breaking free or being 'liberated' from the endless cycle of birth and death, and it getting 'delivered' from its temporary abode in the physical body of the creature. It being 'emancipated' means that its disability to break free has been overcome and it has been finally liberated, but this liberation or emancipation must logically end in the 'salvation' of the creature which means merging of the liberated soul with its primary source which is the Brahm. It is like pouring the cup of water back into the ocean. The main exponent of this philosophy was Sankaracharya.

The Dvaita school believes in duality, i.e. that the supreme Lord (God) and the Jiva (creature) are two separate entities. For this school, there are four types of Mukti, viz (i) Salokya (to live in the abode of the God), (ii) Samipya (to live near God), (iii) Sarupya (to have a form similar to God) and (iv) Saujya (being united with the God). This latter Saujya is also called the 'Param Pad' or supreme state of being one with the Lord.

Since the Advitya school believes in only one end of the soul— its merger with the parent Soul— they emphasis 'Kaivalya Mukti' as the only form of salvation and emancipation. The word Kaivalya itself means 'only'.

The *Jivan Mukti* state has been described in verse nos. 40-62 above; it means freedom from being mentally engrossed in this delusory and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment.

Air is present everywhere, but it is neither visible nor felt unless it blows as a soft breeze when it is felt by its touch on the skin. So, in this case, the soul of a person who has become Videha Mukta is compared to this all-pervading but invisible wind or air which is the mainstay of life in the form of breath or Pran. Consequentially, when a person dies, the breath easily moves out of the body without any trouble. Air as breath or Pran is not a dead entity but very much alive and active like the Atma or soul of the creature. When a person is freed from his body upon death, his Atma is liberated from the boundaries that are imposed upon it by the body. The Atma sets itself free and merges with the vast cosmos which is present outside the body even as the Pran or breath present inside the body is liberated from it when it is exhaled and merges with the air present outside the body. This is tantamount to having liberation without the encumbrance imposed by the body on the Atma of the creature.

Since the true identity of the creature is not his body but the Atma, in the case of 'Videha Mukti', this Atma or soul exits from the trapping of the body much like the breath

going out from inside the body and finding liberation in the outside air. Even as the air does not perish after it leaves the body, the Atma which is the true identity of the creature also does not perish once it leaves the body and is set free.

The word *Videha* means without a body and the word 'Mukti' means liberation and freedom, emancipation and salvation. So loosely, the phrase 'Videha Mukti' means 'freedom from the encumbrance and limitations of the body'. This 'Videha Mukti', generally speaking, is possible when the individual Atma, which is the truthful identity of the creature, leaves the body to merge with the cosmic Atma present outside the body of the individual creature. The example of the breath leaving the body is the best way to explain the concept. While the breath is inside the body, it represents the Atma of the individual because it is surrounded by the physical, gross body, but as soon as it is exhaled it becomes synonymous with being provided with 'Videha Mukti' because it finds freedom from the encumbrances and limitations of the body and merges with the wind present in the vast space outside the body. So if a wise creature becomes totally unaware of his body so much so that he does not even feel the pain of a pin pricking it, when he is totally oblivious of the fact that the body even exists, then in that state of existence he is equivalent to having actually lost the body altogether —that is, the creature has obtained 'Videha Mukti'. This state is usually achieved during meditation by Yogis when they enter 'Samadhi' which is a trance-like state of consciousness.

The word *Kaivalya* means the 'only one' or the non-dual state. It is the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature. There is non-duality and uniformity everywhere. It is a state of existence which is similar to the state of Samadhi in which the man goes about his daily life doing his chores in a routine way without getting emotionally involved in them and even remaining totally oblivious of what he is doing. He remains totally submerged in his inner self and thoughts. He appears in a virtual trance-like state of existence usually observed in realised ascetics and great philosophers. People regard such men as absent minded, but they are so much absorbed in themselves that they are not concerned with what others think of them. For them, the external world ceases to exist though they physically live in it and interact with it. This Kaivalya form of existence is tantamount to being liberated from the fetters that tie the creature to this body and the world because though he lives in the world he is totally indifferent to it; he is free from all worries, sufferings and sorrows as well as all forms of attachments, entanglements and involvements with the artificial and deluding world that are the usual features of an ordinary worldly man submerged in the world's entrapping charms. This state is comparable to the actual and physical liberation of the soul upon death when it is physically liberated from the bondages of the limitations imposed by the gross body; the only difference being that in the former case the man is alive and enjoys the privilege of having a body that allows the ethereal Atma to enjoy this physical world in a totally dispassionate and detached manner as if it is a neutral observer, while in the latter case he sheds the burden of the body altogether.

The Kaivalya state is considered superior because such a man lives a life of happiness and contentedness; he never suffers from any worldly miseries and worries; he treats the world around him as of no consequence, and remains indifferent to its deluding effects and their entanglements. On the other hand, the ordinary man might find emancipation upon death, but his life is a burden while he is still alive in it. Such a man has not truly understood the teachings of the scriptures; he has not understood the 'spirit' of spiritualism and metaphysics as enumerated by the Upanishads because their main aim is to give peace and tranquility to the tormented soul and help in its liberation from the deluding effects of the body and the world.

The Kaivalya form of Mukti envisions the merger of the 'self' with the supreme 'Self' so that there is no chance of the 'self' or the pure conscious Atma to take birth again (refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 108-109 of Krishna Yajur Veda). For all practical purposes as far as the ascetic is concerned, this would be equivalent to merging his soul with Brahm because the supreme Brahm resides in his own 'self' as his Atma or consciousness as well as his Pran or spark of life. Besides this, the very fact that he has reached this state of Samadhi itself indicates that he has crossed the earlier stages where any of the worldly corruptions can demote him and pull him away from his spiritually exalted stature. He would have realised that the body is not his 'true self' but it is the Atma, and that this Atma is the supreme transcendental Consciousness personified. How can anyone with such an enlightened view of the 'self' can ever be expected to be weighed on the same scale as his other brethrens who treat their bodies as their 'self' and remain engrossed in this material world of sense objects. So, though he retains the body and appears to be of a lower category than the ascetic who has discarded his body to merge his 'self' with the supreme Brahm, basically there is no difference between the two. The former type of ascetic who retains the body is called 'Jivan Mukta', or the one who has obtained liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the world while still living in it because he has certain obligations to fulfill, and the latter is called 'Videha Mukta', or the one who has obtained the same liberation and deliverance by abandoning the body. The body in both the cases causes no hindrance for him, because even while he has retained the body as a Jivan Mukta if he prefers the option to do so, he already has acquired so much divine mystical and magical powers called the various Siddhis that he can perform super human and super natural deeds that anyone with a body cannot ever expect or hope to do. These have been enumerated in verse nos. 73-74, 87, 91, 94, 97 and 102 of the Yogtattva Upanishad.

But there is subtle catch here which must be closely observed. Verse nos. 21-22 and 76-79 of the Yogtattva Upanishad clearly state that the use of various Mantras and obtaining Siddhis are impediments in obtaining the true fruit of Yoga; those who wish to acquire them and remain satisfied with them are of a very low type of Yogi.

Further, verse nos. 14-18 of this Yogtattva Upanishad describe what constitutes 'true Gyan' or true knowledge and wisdom, and it is to obtain the only state of existence that can give eternity to the Atma, and it is called 'Kaivalya', and this is the merger of the self with the supreme Self. This is obtainable when the Atma discards the body and finds final liberation and deliverance, or ultimate emancipation and salvation. This is 'unconditional Mukti', while the

one obtained while retaining the body would then naturally be a 'conditional Mukti' because while the body is still there, Mukti cannot be absolute; it is conditional and subject to certain parameters and conditions that naturally come when someone has an obligation to fulfill. The obligation in this case is towards the body because the Atma is obliged to remain inside it and it must pay its due respect and the dwelling 'rent' to it! Therefore, the Atma is under 'conditioned freedom' if the ascetic chooses to retain the body and remain inside it instead of discarding it and becoming 'absolutely free', in which case the Atma becomes 'unconditionally free'. The later state is called 'Kaivalya' Mukti. The body has to be discarded ultimately, sooner or later; the soul is therefore not 'absolutely' free if the ascetic retains the body as compared to the case where he decides to permanently abandon it once the window of golden opportunity arrives during Samadhi.

Therefore, the ascetic has two options open to him as already pointed out in verse nos. 105-107 of the Yogtattva Upanishad—i.e. either to obtain Kaivalya Mukti which is like the Videha Mukti, or to obtain Jivan Mukti. There is only a subtle hair-fine difference between the two.

The path to emancipation and salvation according to the Dvaita school is through the medium of various mediation techniques directed at the chosen deity, such as— (i) Japa (repetition of the holy name of a chosen God), (ii) Huta (offering of rituals and sacrifices), (iii) Archana (roughly meaning worship and service of the chosen deity), (iv) Puja (meaning adoration and worship of the chosen deity by the composite methods mentioned here) and (v) Dhyan (concentrating on the various forms, virtues, activities and glorious stories associated with the deity). For the Advaita school, mediation involves, concentration of the mind and intellect on the non-dual supreme entity which has no form and which is universally present everywhere, residing as it is even inside the very bosom of the aspirant himself. Here, meditation uses various exercises, called Yoga, as well as different restraints and controls to help focus the mind and its faculties on the supreme Truth. That 'truth' is the Atma which is pure consciousness and an embodiment of the supreme Atma of the cosmos known as Brahm.

Now, when we talk of the Atma as pure consciousness or an embodiment of light, the question arises 'how can we obtain the clearest perception of that reality which shall enlighten our path to obtaining liberation and deliverance from the trap of delusions and ignorance?' The greatest exponent of Vedanta philosophy, sage Adi Sankaracharya prescribes the following four paths — (i) discrimination between the eternal and truthful, and the non-eternal and non-truthful, (ii) renunciation of desires for sensual gratification and enjoyment of pleasures from this materialistic world, (iii) development of six divine eclectic wealth —self control, surrender, faith, forbearance, peace/tranquility and poise of the mind, and (iv) sincere desire for liberation and deliverance, because it is only then that the creature will try to find ways to achieve it.

Contemplation in the end, in both the cases, makes the seeker/aspirant realise the futility of the world and kindles in him an intense desire to search out the ultimate Truth

and Reality. The Upanishads here act as a referee and guide. They advise the seeker/ aspirant about the goal of life. What one contemplates with intensity is what one becomes. So, if one contemplates seriously on the 'Truth', he verily becomes the truth personified, and if he contemplates on the 'False', he verily becomes false himself.

Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, describes who gets deliverance in these words:—'He who is unmoved by and treats joys and happiness as well as sorrows, miseries, troubles and misfortunes, gains as well as losses, victories as well as defeats equally, with equanimity and fortitude, whose desires, envies, ill-wills, hatreds, fears and agitations have been completely vanquished or eliminated— is the one who is truly liberated. When old age comes, the body develops wrinkles, becomes lean and decrepit, the hairs change colour to grey, the general appearance looses its sheen and attractiveness while the back tends to bend— one who constantly remains aware of these facts is truly liberated. When the time comes, manliness declines, eyesight fails, the ears do not hear and the vital forces of life becomes weak and on the verge of collapse— one who is always aware these thing is truly liberated. (Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, 288/37, 39-40).

The concept of Mukti is not an independent idea. It does not exist in a water tight compartment, just like no other concept of metaphysics and spiritualism exists independently of the other. Each one of them is intricately and inextricably tied to the rest of them; they run concurrently and parallel to each other. For example, liberation and deliverance from the fetters that tie a creature to this ensnaring world, i.e. achievement of Mukti depends on a horde of other concepts such as Vasanas, Vrittis, Maya, Yoga, Samadhi, the theory of Karma, the nature of Atma and Brahm, Vairagya and so on and so forth. So in order to get a comprehensive idea of Mukti necessarily involves other concepts. Here, let us examine this concept of 'Mukti' in detail because it would help to focus the attention on other relevant subjects as well.

Amongst the different Upanishads describing the concept of Mukti, we shall see here some of them to describe each type of Mukti.

(1) The *Sarwasaar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 describes the concept of Mukti in a very definitive way. To quote—

"Verse no. 2 =The same pure consciousness known as the Atma assumes two roles, one as the 'Jiva' or the individual living creature who has a body and is therefore subjected to the influence of all the characteristics attributed to this gross and perishable body, as well as to the various limitations imposed by it on the Atma, and as the 'Ishwar' or the supreme Lord of all that exists, including the individual creature, who is not under such influences or limitations.

This exalted, sublime, divine and eclectic entity known as the Atma—which is most wise and enlightened and the Lord of all existence in its role as the supreme transcendental truthful consciousness needing no proof such as the existence of an active physical gross body to establish its veracity and existence—assumes (under delusory effects of the various misconceptions that are integral part of the artificial world in which this Atma lives as a creature) that it has a 'physical body'. This conception that 'I have a body', which is actually a misrepresentation of the actual truth, creates a sense of ego and pride in the Atma, a sense of

belonging and attachment[1]. It is this misconception that is at the root of all fetters that tie down the inherently and eternally free Atma of the creature, and prevents its liberation and deliverance from the body as well as the world in which this body lives and with which it is intricately entangled, along with their attendant problems which are natural and inherent to them. This is called 'Bandhan'—literally, a bondage, a tie or fetter that shackles the Atma.

On the contrary, to be dispassionate towards the body, to have no sense of ego and pride in this body and its achievements or feel dejected and fallen at its failures is called 'Moksha' or 'Mukti', which is being liberated and delivered from all shackles that tie down the creature and prevent its emancipation and salvation (2).

[Note—[1]The Atma is inherently and primarily un-encumbered and unattached to anything, being a disembodied 'spirit' much like the wind or air element. It is, like this wind or air element, all-pervading and omnipresent as well as eternally free and liberated. But when this same wind is enclosed in, say, a mud pot, it appears to have a body which is the 'mud pot'. Essentially, the air inside the wall of the pot and the one outside its wall are the same and non-differentiable, but they appear to be two separate airs due to ignorance about the fundamental truth both about the air element as well as the mud pot.

The same thing applies to the sky element inside and outside the pot. The ignorance that both the skies are the same leads one to name the space inside the clay pot as the 'Ghatakash' (Ghat = pot; Akash = sky) and the one outside it as 'Mahakash' (Maha = greater; Akash = sky). The purity and basic characters of the air or sky within and without this pot remain unaffected by the physical mud wall of the pot.

Similarly, the Atma in its cosmic form as the supreme transcendental Consciousness and as the soul of the individual creature is the same and one, being non-dual in its essential character like the air or sky cited above. It is due to the misleading and corrupted vision created by the intervening delusions called Maya that act like a veil surrounding the Atma when it assumes the form of the individual creature living in this gross world characterised by this special quality of covering everything in a thick layer of Maya that the Atma begins to think it has a 'physical gross body'. Once caught in this delusory whirlpool, it gets sucked in its vortex of more misconceptions, leading to the situation that the basically pristine pure Atma forgets about its natural character and becomes a worldly creature who thinks that his true identity is the body, and therefore begins to link himself with everything with which the gross body is linked. The Atma becomes proud of its grand status of being a human being, for example, and looks down upon other creatures in creation; the Atma begins to treat other creatures with contempt and disdainfully looks upon them as if they were much inferior to it; the Atma looks upon all the achievements of the body as its own accomplishments, becomes proud of them and consequentially haughty of the possession of the body and its abilities; the Atma thinks that all the deeds done by the body during the natural course of its interaction with the material world in which the body lives as being done by it (the Atma), and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds, etc.

These misconceptions of the Atma vis-à-vis the body is called 'ignorance-based delusion' about its 'truthful self'. In fact, the Atma is an ethereal cosmic disembodied pure conscious 'spirit' much like the cosmic wind or air element, or even the sky element which has no forms and colours of their own.

The concept of Mukti or Moksha have been expounded in other Upanishads as well, some of them are Muktiko-panishad, Mandal Brahmin 2/4/3-4, Paingalo-panishad, 3/9-11 etc. This concept has also been described in a separate appendix of this volume in detail.

A very simple example would illustrate how the Atma gets trapped in this world. A river has its origin in the mountain glacier and cascades down its slopes and heads straight to the ocean. This is the ideal situation. But it is not so in practice as it faces numerous natural and man-made obstacles in its path. There are hills and other geographical obstacles which are natural, and dams, cities and other man-made hindrances which force it to change its normal course, get diverted and sometimes lost in this maze. Waste, city and industrial effluents and other forms of pollutants taint its pristine clarity and purity, thereby tarnishing it and robbing of it of its life-rejuvenating character. The river is milked of its dynamism and energy, and by the time it reaches the ocean it is reduced to a forked delta which appears a distant faint image of the gush of sparkling and frothy milk-like ambrosia that appears to be descending directly down from the heavens upon the earth. The Atma or the individual creature's consciousness or his soul is similarly subjected to numerous impediments in its natural course heading to its primary resting place with Brahm, the supreme transcendental Consciousness. As a result, the Atma gets distracted from its course, getting entangled in Maya and its delusory effects.]"

(2) *Maho-panishad*, canto 2, verse no.37-73 describes the conversation between sage Shukdeo and the enlightened king Janak, the father-in-law of Lord Ram. It defines and describes Mukti in detail as follows:—

"This knowledge is the essence of all the sciences (i.e. metaphysical and spiritual sciences) and the secret of all the mysteries of creation that exist. Hence, by knowing it, by becoming aware of it, and being enlightened about it, a person gets deliverance and emancipation very soon'. A person gets a type of liberation and deliverance from this mundane life, which is called 'Jivan Mukti' (37).

'This visible world does not exist at all' —when the mind realises this fact or firmly believes in it, then it becomes free from the allurements that the enticing stimuli originating from the material objects of this visible world present to it. When this happens, the knowledge regarding the ultimate truth is said to mature into a ripe fruit, and it is only then that the supreme peace and tranquility symbolising emancipation and salvation is achieved by the creature (38).

Abandonment of 'Vasanas' (worldly passions and inherent tendencies that create desires, yearnings, wishes, lust, attachments and allurements towards this world) is the best form of renunciation. Erudite, wise, sagacious and learned ones have called this state

of renunciation of 'Vasanas' pertaining to this world being equivalent to 'Moksha' (i.e. liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackles the creature to this artificial, entrapping and mundane world) (39)

Oh the most exalted, wise and enlightened sage (Shukdeo)! Only those persons who have good, uncorrupt, untainted, righteous, pure and good 'Vasanas' which are desirable and good, those whose life has no distress, miseries, misfortune, any kind of offence or sorrow in it (i.e. those whose life is not unworthy, not in vain, not useless and not offensive for others, those who are not a burden on the society), and those who have the knowledge of the essence that is worthy to be known —only such types of persons are said to be fully freed or liberated from this humdrum, mundane and entrapping life (40).

The erroneous determination and fallacious belief that the material objects have an actual existence, is called 'worldly shackle'. [That is, these wrong perceptions about the world that it is true and real along with its material objects are like ties that bog down a person to this false and entrapping world.] On the other hand, the decay and ultimate perishing of the 'Vasanas' is called 'Moksha' (liberation and deliverance from the fetters that shackle the creature to this false, entrapping and artificial world. (Good Vasanas or 'Shuddha Vasanas' are those which are beneficial for the spiritual upliftment of the creature as opposed to bad Vasanas or 'Ashuddha Vasanas' which are harmful and demeaning for his spiritual upliftment. Some of the good Vasanas are a desire to help others, work for their welfare, desire to have emancipation and salvation and endeavour to accomplish it, etc.). (41).

Those who, by nature, don't like to enjoy the objects of this world and prefer to do 'Tapa' (austerity, penances and observing sacraments rigorously) are deemed to be freed or liberated from this mundane life in this world. That is, those persons who prefer to do Tapa and do not like the allurements presented to them by the material objects of this world, or those who remain aloof from the artificial world and its pleasures and comforts, and instead prefer to be renunciate and dispassionate towards this world and involve themselves in observing penances and austerities and keeping stern vows of self control and restraint —such persons are said to be freed or liberated even while they are alive in this world (42).

Those who are not affected or moved by the various joys and happiness as well as by sorrows and miseries which keep coming and going in pulsating waves every other moment, and neither do they feel miserable or anguished as well as cheerful or happy during these circumstances when they arrive, such persons are called freed or liberated from this mundane life (43).

Those who are free from, or beyond the purview and reach of such sentiments and emotions, such feelings as that of joys and exhilarations, sorrows and distress, fear and consternation, 'Kaam' (desires, lust, passions, yearnings) and 'Krodh' (anger), grief and regret, and other such worldly faults associated with the mind and heart, are deemed to be freed or liberated from this mundane, artificial and entrapping world (44).

Those who easily forsake 'egoistic Vasanas' and have a holistic renunciate approach towards everything pertaining to this world, they are indeed truly freed or liberated from this mundane life in this world. (Egoistic Vasanas are those that arouse ego and self pride and arrogance in a person. Such as, 'I can do this and therefore I will do it and get success and acquire fame'. Once success comes, the person thinks 'I did it and I am successful. Therefore I possess the power to do this thing, and the honour of its successful completion also belongs to me. Now, I must take the next step and do something better') (45).

Those who are contemplative and thoughtful by nature, have no materialistic desires, have no wish or hope or expectation of anything and neither do they have any worldly aspirations, and instead they have an existence, like that of a man who is in a deep sleep state of existence i.e. they are like a sleeping man who does not even dream of any event. They are the ones who have freed or liberated themselves from this humdrum, entrapping and mundane life in this world (46).

Those who are ever submerged in the Atma (which is the pure self and enlightened and illuminated pure consciousness), those whose mind is contented and fulfilled, those who are peaceful, tranquil, calm and serene, those who have no desires or yearning or wish or expectations for anything in this mortal and temporal world, those who have no attachment with anyone and roam about with total detachment and dispassion, having equanimity towards all —all such persons are deemed to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and entrapping life in this world (47).

Those whose heart does not get involved or emotionally attached to any object of this world and those who are an embodiment of righteous, noble, virtues and truthful knowledge —they are the ones who are said to be free or liberated from this mundane, artificial and entrapping life in this world (48).

Those who are equitable, even and unruffled in opposite situations such as infatuation and hatred, joys and sorrows, honour and insult, righteousness and unrighteousness as well as good or bad rewards of various actions and deeds, those who remain busy, without getting mentally and emotionally charged up and involved with their (selfless) work —they are the ones who are called freed or liberated from this mundane, artificial and entrapping life in this world (49).

Those who have forsaken 'Ahankar' (ego, pride, haughtiness, arrogance), those who are devoid of pride, envy, jealously, malice and ill-will towards others and continue to do their worldly duties and chores without getting agitated and making any resolves about them —they are the ones who are deemed to be free or liberated from this mundane, artificial and entrapping life in this world (50).

Those who live a life as if they were a mere witness to all that is happening without any involvement and attachment to the goings-on and continue to selflessly do their assigned and designated work and duties without any expectations or hopes of a reward —they are said to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (51).

Those who have abandoned both righteousness and unrighteousness (i.e. they remain equitable and unruffled, with equanimity and fortitude, in varying circumstances), those who have abandoned all thoughts of this materialistic world and its objects, those who have abandoned all desires, hopes and expectations, yearnings and aspirations — they are deemed to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (52).

Those who have completely forsaken this world of delusions, artificiality and illusions that is visible all around —they are called freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (53).

The wise one who accepts all types of food, whether it is bitter, sour or salty, whether it is crunchy, crispy and tasty as well as bland, stale and tasteless without making any distinction between them —such a person is said to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (54).

Adversities such as old age, death, troubles and misfortunes, or with prosperity (such as being crowned a king of any place) as well as poverty and dearth of even the necessities of life —such persons are deemed to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (55).

Those who have completely eliminated from their hearts the distinction between 'Dharma and Adharma' (i.e. what is noble and what is ignoble), the difference between 'Sukh and Dukh' (i.e. comfort and happiness as well as suffering and torments, anguish and sorrows) as well as death and birth —such persons are deemed to be liberated and delivered from the shackles that tie a person to this mundane, artificial life in this world (56).

Those persons who are devoid of all agitations including joys of all kinds (i.e. those who are neither distressed or annoyed nor delighted or happy), those who are even-keeled and unruffled even during grief and sorrows as well as during joys and happiness, those who are endowed with a clean and uncorrupt mind-intellect complex — they are the ones who are said to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (57).

Those who have fully renounced all hopes, desires, ambitions, resolutions, vows and aspiration pertaining to this world —they are the ones who are called freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (58).

Those persons whose mind remains stable, calm, serene and steady during birth, sustenance and annihilation periods or phases of life as well as during its development and progress or its downfall, degradation, degeneration and demotion —they are the ones

who are deemed to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (59).

Those who do not keep any kind of malice and ill-will against anybody, those who do not expect anything from anyone, those who just pass through the sufferings or enjoyments that come their way due to destiny with equanimity and indifference, treating them both alike —they are the ones who are said to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (60).

Those who have abandoned or forsaken all desires for the objects of sensual gratification in this world, those who have made their minds defunct in this respect (i.e. those who have stopped thinking about this artificial world and its material objects of comfort and pleasure) —they are the ones who are deemed to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (61).

Those persons who remain indifferent towards the worldly attraction of money and wealth like it were someone else's property inspite of being surrounded by pageantry, pomp and pelf (i.e. inspite of owning them), indeed such great, righteous, virtuous, wise and enlightened persons can experience the supreme truth in the Atma/soul, and verily they are deemed to be freed or liberated from this humdrum, artificial and mundane life in this world (62).

At the time of discarding their mortal bodies upon death, they (i.e. those persons who have the characteristic features, virtues and qualities as described above in this Canto) rise above the 'Jivan Mukti state' and attain the superior state of 'being one who has freed himself from the binding fetters of the limitations imposed by this gross body', a state called 'Videha Mukti' (literally meaning liberation without the encumbrance imposed by the limitations of the gross body). They become like the wind element which does not blow (63).

In this state of 'Videha Mukti', there is neither enhancement of stature nor demotion or degradation in it of any kind, and neither does the creature perish. This state of the creature (soul) is beyond debates of truth or false, and neither it is near or far from anywhere (because it is all pervading, omnipresent and immanent just like the wind element of the creation; so this question of it being near or far, being true or false, does not arise) (64).

That state (Videha Mukti) is a neutral and inert state of existence. There is neither light nor darkness in it. It has a mysterious element of truth in it that cannot be described, and which has no name or attributes, qualifications or qualities that can define or delineate it (65).

It is neither void (e.g. vacuum of space) nor gross (e.g. a piece of lead). It is neither visible as an object nor as an invisible perception of the senses. It is akin to neither the basic elements of creation (earth, water, fire, air and space) nor their gross manifestations in the form of the diverse and myriad objects of the world (66).

That absolute Truth and Reality is simply present in an intrinsic and inherent manner in this world. [That is, it is there because the world is there. The proof of it being there is

the world's existence]. It is such an astoundingly mysterious, most fascinating and astonishing element whose form, attributes, characteristics and features can't be delineated and described. Its form and nature (if these terms help to define it somehow or somewhat) are more complete than the absolute whole. It is neither a truth nor a falsehood; neither a half-truth nor a half-falsehood. It is beyond emotions and sentiments, beyond understating and comprehension (67).

It is simply uncorrupted and undiluted 'pure consciousness'; it is also eternal, infinite and without any mind-intellect complex (which the ordinary living creatures possess). It is free from old age, is an embodiment of 'Shiva element' (i.e. auspiciousness, truth, beauty, erudition, wisdom and eternity), and is a bestower of welfare to the Atma/soul of the creature (i.e. it provides the soul with an opportunity to get truthful and real welfare which is its emancipation and salvation). It has no beginning, no middle or center and no end. It is infinite and faultless (68).

In the 'Triad of Seers' consisting of the 'person' who sees, the 'object' (the scene which is seen), and the 'process of seeing' (the action or activity of seeing or observing), the Atma as pure consciousness is said to pertain to the last one (i.e. it is only a witness in the process of seeing, it is only a medium by which the objects of the world are seen or observed by the entity that sees them. Hence, just like the medium has no interest in either the person who is seeing or the object which is being seen, 'it' too remains neutral to both of them).

Oh sage (Shukdeo)! Nothing else can be said with certainty in connection with it (69).

You have understood this essential Truth which is the absolute Realty and an irrefutable, immutable and immaculate fact by self study or self realisation. This knowledge has come to you also by hearing about it from you father (sage Veda Vyas). This knowledge basically means that a creature gets shackled to the mundane, artificial and entrapping world due to its own inclinations and wishes, its own desires and aspirations, and it gets liberation and deliverance from it due to its own wishes and desires, its own powers, diligent efforts and sincere aspirations (70).

Hence, you have already acquired that essential and truthful knowledge, after acquisition of which the erudite, wise, saintly, pious and spiritually oriented people become dispassionate or disenchanted with all the visible objects of this perishable and temporal world along with its pleasures and comforts (71).

You have reached that state of complete enlightenment where you are deemed to have acquired all that there is worthy to be acquired. Hence, you are established in the high stature obtained as a result of doing Tapa (observation of austerity and doing penances and keeping religious vows which makes a person capable of acquiring anything he wished because Tapa gives him immense potentials). You must abandon negative traits such as having doubts, confusions, perplexities and confoundedness from your mind because you have reached the high state of 'Mukti' (as described in aforesaid verses) (72).

Oh Shukdeo! You do not see what is outside and beyond it. You do not see what is inside and hidden in it. You are a neutral witness and are firmly established in that final and ultimate state of existence where there is no duality. (The Mukti referred to here is 'Jivan Mukti' and not 'Videha Mukti' simply because sage Shukdeo is still alive. 'Jivan Mukti' has been described in verse no. 37, which briefly means that he has become totally dispassionate and detached from all the allurements and enticements offered by the objects of gratification present in this world, he has conquered his emotions and sentiments, he is even, patient and calm as is evident from the fact that he did not become angry at kind Janak when he was made to wait at the palace gates. He also was not enchanted by beautiful women or indulged in eating delicious food inside the palace. These are the virtues in him that Janak had tested when he had made him wait for seven days at a stretch for three consecutive periods when he had come to meet the king. 'Jivan Mukti' refers to being dispassionate and equitable to this world while a person still has a body and goes about his daily routine as usual.

The state of existence referred to here is the state when the creature realises the true nature of his Atma and the falsehoods of the external world. In this state, the only thing that remains is the 'truth'. The word 'Kewal' means 'the only one'. The only one here refers to the absolute Truth and Reality of creation which is also one without a second)".(73).

(3) The *Paingalo-panishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition explains what it is like to be in the Jivan Mukti state. It says—"With this enlightenment, what was understood theatrically earlier in relation with the saying 'Tattwamasi' (you are that) is now realised first hand. That is, now the seeker understands the true import of this statement; he realises that the word 'that' which refers to the ultimate Truth of creation which is pure conscious Atma or Soul known as Brahm is the same as the one that resides in his own bosom. And therefore all the grand and honourable epithets, the glorious virtues and benefits which are applicable to 'that' (i.e. Brahm) are also applicable to him (i.e. 'you'). This profound realisation or awakening makes him truly liberated even while he is alive and has a physical body with which he interacts with the world in an ordinary way—a state called 'Jivan Mukti'[1] (5).

[Note—[1]As a Jivan Mukta person who is freed from the fetters of ignorance while he is alive, now his views have undergone a sea change; now he does everything with dispassion and detachment; now he treats everything as Brahm and each deed as an offering to that Brahm; now he realises that it is his body which is doing the deed and not his Atma, his pure self, and therefore he does not get mentally or emotionally involved in them so much so that he is blessed with the great qualities of equanimity, equality and forbearance, being equal and tolerant towards all, treating any circumstance on its merit and not judging it with any vested interests at work, and becoming an exemplary benchmark of righteousness and auspiciousness. This lends a selfless, holy and pious dimension to anything that he does. All his actions become one big holy sacrifice and a play of Dharma (something that is righteous and auspicious; that is noble and proper).

The word Jivan means 'life' and Mukti means 'freedom and liberation'. A person who has the grand, noble, righteous and virtuous characteristics as well as is enlightened and self-realised about the ultimate truth of this creation becomes totally detached from this artificial, mundane and illusionary world even while he physically lives in it, has a body, and goes about his routine duties and chores and does his assigned jobs in this world. But with erudition and truthful knowledge he has realised the futility of this world, and therefore he remains completely dispassionate and detached from it just like a dew drop lying on the petal of a lotus flower. He does not get the least agitated or affected or passionate by any set of circumstances, whether adverse or favourable. He remains aloof and unruffled. That is being equivalent to becoming free from all the mental, emotional and physical uneasiness created by the turmoil of this world. It is deemed that such a person has obtained virtual deliverance from the shackles of this entrapping world, a condition called 'being emancipated and delivered while still alive'; this phrase explains what constitutes Jivan Mukti.

The Jivan Mukti state refers to freedom from being mentally engrossed in this delusory and artificial world and becoming free from the shackles that tie a person to the cycle of transmigration in this world while he still physically lives in it and carries out his assigned and designated duties and works with dispassion and detachment. This enables the creature to be free from any mental bondage that tie it to the ensnaring world; it is tantamount to be liberated from the shackles of this world while still living in the world with a body and going about one's daily chores in a routine manner. After all, the very existence of the world is due to the mind; if the mind does not think that the world has any relevance, then it loses all pertinence and relevance for the creature.

It would be relevant to point out here that without the control of the Mana (mind) and Indris (sense organs) it is practically impossible to dissociate oneself from the world. The mind and the sense organs of a man are inherently very restless. Their control is called 'Nigraha'. The word 'control' implies that both of them are reined in and prevented from recklessly following their usual sense objects of the material world, seeking comfort and pleasure from them. To do this we have to set a goal, and then focus them on these goals, for then, their energy and agility would be diverted towards that goal. For this purpose the goal would be spiritual and that would mean self knowledge and self realisation. Once this spiritual goal is set, the Ahankar or self esteem, pride and ego inherent in a man will take care of the rest—for now he would do his best not to fail in his endeavour which he has set for himself by himself. A focused mind and sense would help the man to control them, for now they would find no time and energy to go berserk and have to live up to their expectations.

Another method is to focus the mind on one thing at a time—and this time it is self knowledge. Once the mind is focused on this target, it would try to find out how to achieve it, and then actually implement that method.

These methods are positive and are more helpful as compared to methods used to suppress the mind and sense organs, because then they would feel like being trapped under duress and would try to break free at the first opportunity, creating greater distress to the seeker.]"

(4) The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes when a man achieves 'Jivan Mukti' in its 1/4/3-4; 2/3/6-7; 2/4/5-6. Let us see them one by one. Brahman (canto) 1, section 4, verse nos. 3-4 is quoted here—

"Verse no. 3 = The Jiva (the living creature) is the twenty-fifth 'Tattwa'[1] or elementary form in which the entire creation exists. [That is, out of all the variations in which the creation came into existence, there is an entity known as a living being or a living creature with a body. This is a general term to define all living creatures that have a body—whether it be an animal, a bird, an insect or a human being. Incidentally, humans are included in the animal kingdom, and not, say, in the plant kingdom, or are categorised as any chemicals or metals or alloys etc. by even modern day scientists. In other words, 'Jiva' is a general term to include all living beings which have a soul.]

Besides this twenty-fifth elementary form of creation, there are twenty four other elements. When the wise and enlightened person thinks that 'he', i.e. his truthful and real identity and his essential form, is beyond any of these twenty five elementary forms in which the creation exists, then he comes to realise that he himself is the 'Parmatma', i.e. he is a personification and a synonym of the supreme transcendental Soul or Atma. He realises that he is the cosmic soul personified as the Jiva. [Here, the self-realised man understands the true meaning of the word Atma—that entity which is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and supreme, that which is beyond the reach and grasp of the mind and the intellect, that which is at the core of spiritual research and contemplation, and that which is the cause of all that exists].

When this realisation dawns upon him, he is deemed to be liberated and delivered from this mundane, artificial, entrapping and delusory world even while living in it with a gross and perishable body. He is called 'Jivan Mukta' or a person who has obtained liberation of all bondages in this life itself. [In other words, a truly wise man understands that his 'self' is the pure conscious Atma (soul, spirit) that resides in his own bosom, and it is distinct from the physical gross body. The Atma is subtle, sublime and ethereal, while the body is gross, perishable and mundane. This awareness about the truthful identity, about his 'real self' as opposed to 'apparent self', liberates a wise and enlightened man from being tied to his pseudo identity known as the body. He kind of de-links his 'true self' from his 'pseudo self or apparent self'. This is tantamount to breaking free from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had made him believe till now that his body is his 'self', and there is nothing beyond the gross body that can be called 'me or I'. As we have seen, this is a total erroneous perception of the true self.] (3).

[Note—[1]The Tattwa have been described in s. no. 19 of this appendix.]

"Verse no. 4 = In this way, while experiencing and witnessing the pure consciousness which is perceived inside his very bosom, that spiritual aspirant/seeker of the Truth gradually progresses towards the state of 'Jivan Mukti' (see verse no. 3), and in due course of time he becomes one like the glorious illuminated entity that was being hitherto witnessed and

experienced inside his bosom. Gradually, this exalted state of self-realisation which has made him freed from the limitations imposed by the gross body also enables him to rise higher in his spiritual pursuit and become one like the sky which is infinite, fathomless, eternal, immutable, colourless and uncorrupt. [In other words, self-realisation makes a man feel freed from the limitations that are inherent in a gross body. This is because his 'true self', i.e. the Atma, is the universal ethereal spirit which has no physical limitations or boundaries to hem it in, or which it needs to overcome or cross to find freedom. This spirit has the nearest analogue in the air or wind element which pervades throughout the sky, and it can go wherever it likes; nothing can tie in the wind. Therefore, a man freed from the limiting fetters of the physical body assumes a symbolic form which acquires all the universal characteristics of the sky element. He becomes one without limits.] (4).

[Note—After one is able to witness and experience the presence of the self-illuminated and conscious Atma inside one's own heart, he realises that what he was hitherto considering to be his own self, i.e. his body, is not his true identity; rather it was a vehicle to carry him during his sojourn in this world till the time the effects of his past deeds do not wear out. He realises that his 'truthful' self is the glorious Atma which is pure consciousness. This awareness fills him with a sense of majesty and happiness because now he does have to feel depressed by the various problems and inherent faults associated with the gross body. This sets him free from the bondage of serfdom of the body; he is liberated from its pains, sufferings, shortcomings and blemishes. He becomes his 'true self' which is glorious, magnificent, stupendous and powerful, and which is an image or incarnate manifestation of the majestic Lord of creation. Obviously, when one realises about his exalted lineage and heritage, he feels exhilarated and fulfilled, not having any dearth of anything.

In other words, such a self-realised man becomes literally liberated from the fetters of ignorance that had him trapped in the false conception that the body is one's true self or identity, instead of the Atma. Such a man is freed from the imaginary shackle put on his soul. He remains free from this imaginary shackle even though he lives in this world with a body. He treats the body merely as vehicle or medium to complete his worldly journey which has been imposed upon him or which he has to undertake due to the cumulative effects of his past deeds. He also realises his folly of even thinking that he has done any deed, because he understands that the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma. Therefore, once these realities dawn upon him, he is not mentally and emotionally involved in any of the deeds done by the body in this birth, thereby accumulating nothing as 'past deed' that would force him to take another birth. This is called the state of 'Jivan Mukti'.

The spiritual vision of a person who has realised the truth about himself and the rest of the creation consisting of the same Truth broadens to include not only the view of his own self as the conscious Atma, but also to see that Atma everywhere in the rest of the creation; his vision expands to include the entire gamut of Truth which is not limited to his own self but extends to the rest of the creation as well. A wise and enlightened man is deemed to have realised that the consciousness known as the Atma is the fount of all

virtues, the very source and the cause of all that exists; therefore this Atma is also known as Brahm which is deemed to be the ultimate Truth and absolute Reality in creation as well as the cause of all that exists. This truth about the Atma is not limited only to him but it prevails everywhere just like the sky which is uniformly and universally present everywhere and is all inclusive; nothing exists that is not within the circumference or parameters or boundary of the sky; nothing exists outside the sky. Similarly, nothing exists outside the purview of the Atma, whether at the micro level of the individual creature, or at the macro level of the universe. This broadness of vision is metaphorically expressed by saying 'he becomes one like the sky'.

There is another interpretation of this statement. The realised soul understands that the Atma and Pran go hand in hand, because consciousness and life co-exist. There would be no use of having any 'life' without the presence of consciousness in a gross, inane and inert body, and what is the use of having 'consciousness' in such a body that has no life in it. To illustrate, suppose the man's body has life in it in the sense that it is alive and the man's external organs are functioning properly, but suppose that man in stupid, of a low intellect, does not have proper mental development which is in accordance with his age, or lives a pervert life full of sins and misdeeds, showing no signs of having any awareness of what is right and what is wrong, having no remorse or compunctions of any kind. He shows no signs of having any 'consciousness' in him, he is not 'conscious' about his responsibilities and duties; he is not 'conscious' about the righteous way of correct living, and lives a life like that of an animal! Then say, what is the use of this man living at all?

Further, we have cases when people are artificially kept alive by machines and medicines, though their mind and intellect have been non-functional for a given time. What good is having such a 'life'? Such a man rather becomes a burden on the society as well as on his own self.

Again, suppose a man is very wise and enlightened and conscious about his righteous duties and responsibilities. But then suppose that man is paralysed half down his body—that is, his lower part of the body has 'no life' in it. Then say what good is such consciousness which does not let him die and forces him to live a burdensome life like vegetation.

So we see that both 'consciousness' or the Atma and 'life' or Pran are vitally important for the man's existence to be worthwhile in this world. So, the realisation of the ultimate spiritual Truth while still living in this world and having a physical body—is called being 'Jivan Mukta'.]"

The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/3/6-7 is quoted here—

"Verse no. 6 = A person whose different 'Sankalps' (i.e. various volitions, determinations, ambitions, desires, vows and resolves) have been totally and completely annihilated or exhausted or overcome or eliminated or brought under control, only such a person can have access to 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance (from ignorance, from the various delusions, from this mundane and artificial world of various illusions and entrapments).

Such a sincere seeker of Mukti becomes totally dispassionate and detached from all kinds of things that are trapping by nature, things that are transient, mortal, artificial and deluding, thereby completely renouncing all his mental, intellectual, emotional and sentimental attachments or dealings with them, and instead of them focusing his attention on the supreme Parmatma (as he is the only truthful Authority that is the provider of eternity and bliss as well as liberation and deliverance to the soul of the seeker from the trap into which it finds itself in), he indeed becomes 'Mukta' (i.e. such a wise and enlightened person indeed attains liberation and deliverance from all kinds of shackles that tie an ordinary creature who is not wise and enlightened enough) (6).

[Note—An enlightened person who has realised the truth about the eternal source of bliss, who has realised the falsehood of this world and the truthfulness of the Atma and its parent Parmatma is no more attracted to this world of artificiality and delusions. He sees the world as hollow and without any pith and substance. He realises that getting involved in the world of material sense objects is only a source of endless sufferings and sorrows, and they would ensnare him in their clutches from which it is very difficult to tear one self free. This trap creates slavery for the man instead of giving him peace and tranquility. So to break free from this shackle created by ignorance about the reality and truth is equivalent to attaining Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul from delusions and ignorance.]

"Verse no. 7 = Hence it is repeatedly emphasised that a person can attain the exalted state of being 'Jivan Mukta' (i.e. liberated and delivered from worldly shackles created by delusions and ignorance even while he is alive and interacts with this world) if he avoids getting bogged down, confused and perplexed in the maze created by so many countless aspects of metaphysics and theology—such as what is knowledge and what is the object of that knowledge, what are the various meditative theories and techniques and what are the objects (benefits, rewards) of those meditative practices, in debating what to see or observe or pursue or follow and what not to, what is the truthfulness and fact of what is seen and what is not seen, what is gross and what is subtle, or engaging endlessly in such debates, logics and arguments[1]. This is verily the knowledge contained herein, and a person who has this knowledge is indeed regarded as knowledgeable and erudite (7).

[Note—[1]That is, it is useless and in vain to waste one's time and energy by allowing one self to be confused and perplexed willingly by getting trapped in the bog of uncertainty and doubts created by such endless debates and discussions concerning various aspects of scriptures and metaphysics. The Truth (Brahm and Atma; pure enlightened consciousness) has to be realised first hand by a person in order to be convinced about its authenticity and irrefutability, and mere debates and discussions about it are not conducive to sufficiently convince him about its veracity so as to make him a staunch follower of that Truth. On the contrary, they would cause more perplexities and confusions about the Truth and how to reach it or realise it than removing them.]"

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4/5-6 is quoted here—

"Verse no. 5 = The Mana (the subtle mind and heart complex) which has different 'Sankalps' (i.e. has various volitions, determinations, vows and resolutions that have to be fulfilled) is said to be under a bondage, while freedom from such shackles is called 'Moksha' (i.e. the mind and heart that is free form the fetters created by having various Sankalps is deemed to be liberated) (5).

"Verse no. 6 = A person who has attained that exalted state of existence of consciousness and possesses glorious qualities (as described in the foregoing verses) is then not at all concerned with what his various organs of perception such as the eye perceive vis-à-vis the external world. He neither is affected by nor does he have even a trace of (literally 'no smell' of) any of the delusions and ignorance that are so characteristic of this external material but artificial world of sense objects. He perceives the whole world through the eye of wisdom and enlightenment, and realises that in this deluding world the only essence that is there which is worth accepting and dealing with is nothing but the consciousness known as the Atma or soul; the rest is all fictitious and illusive. Or in other words, the Atma is an image of all that is worth lauding, worth admiring and worth accepting in this world; the Atma is the essence of what is known as the world (and the rest is all ignorance based delusion and an illusionary creation of the mind). This Atma is the pure consciousness residing in the aspirant's own bosom. So with this grand realisation he firmly thinks that 'I am Brahm' (because whatever is there in this creation is nothing but a manifestation of the same transcendental supreme authority known as Brahm that also happens to be his Atma, as the Atma of the creature is also a part of creation and not outside it). But this statement precludes the existence of the negative notion of 'Ahankar', or the sense of pride and ego that the person is the supreme authority himself, because this statement comes with the supreme realisation of the absolute Truth and in such states of realisation there is no scope of negative notions to have any place.

[This idea that I am such and such, and have such great powers and authority, is a character of worldly people who are under the influence of ignorance about their real form and nature, and are deluded by such notions as I am this and I am that. These stupid ideas do not ever enter the mind of a really intelligent and wise person; he would be rather humble and pious and submissive and modest, and he would be devoid of all forms of haughtiness and arrogance and hypocrisy that are generated by ignorance and delusions of self-grandeur.]

The eclectic and holistic notion and the firm conviction that 'all this is Atma' (and what is not Atma is not real) lends in him a sense of fulfillment and contentedness. Since he has realised that he is that Atma, he feels accomplished and fortunate (6)."

(5) The *Adhyatma Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda describes 'Jivan Mukti' in its verse nos. 12 and 43-47. Let us see what it says on the subject.

"Verse no. 12 = Termination of all deeds, i.e. not getting emotionally and mentally involved in any deed pertaining to this material, entrapping and deluding world, helps in elimination of worries and anxieties, which in turn help to destroy Vasanas (literally the various passions, yearnings, lusts and desires pertaining to this world and its material objects and deriving self

gratification). Elimination of Vasanas is equivalent to Moksha (final emancipation and salvation of the soul). It is called 'Jivan Mukti'[1] which refers to being liberated from the fetters that shackle a creature's Atma to the entrapping world and delivering it from its attendant horrors and torments while the creature is still alive in this world, has a physical body and does necessary deeds that are expected of him. [That is, if a person is able to vanquish his worldly passions and desires, if he has developed true wisdom that enlightens him on the false nature of the world and inspires him to do what is expected of him in a dispassionate and detached manner, both mentally and emotionally, he is able to overcome all sorts of avoidable worries and anxieties. Consequentially, he finds blissful peace.] [12].

[Note— [1]There are basically two types of Muktis—(1) Jivan Mukti, and (2) Videh Mukti. A person who has attained Jivan Mukti—which implies that he has obtained liberation from the fetters that shackles a creature to the body and the external world and has found deliverance from its horrible torments (Mukti) even while he is alive and has a body (Jivan)—is deemed to have tasted that elixir (Amrit). He physically lives in this world but remains oblivious of it.

Videha Mukti is higher than Jivan Mukti. While Jivan Mukti implies that a wise and enlightened man has become detached from and indifferent to the external world by the virtue of his disassociation from the deeds done by the body though he seems to continue to enjoy living in this world but only in a perfunctory manner, thereby breaking the cycle of deeds and having to bear their fruits, Videha Mukti refers to the eclectic state when he is not even aware of the presence of his body. He feels no pain, no comfort, no bodily urges and no encumbrances pertaining to the body whatsoever. Further ahead on the spiritual path would be the Videha Mukti which comes with complete abandonment of the body by moving out of it by doing certain Yoga exercises or as a result of natural death of the body. These two concepts are not exclusive to each other but go hand in hand, for to attain Videha Mukti one must first become Jivan Mukti because it is only when one has broken free from the fetters that shackle the soul to this cycle of life (birth and death) can he expect to attain Videha Mukti which literally translates into liberation without the attending impediment of the body.

The concept of 'Jivan Mukti' and 'Videha Mukti' has been elaborately described as a note to verse no. 19 of Shattya-yani Upanishad, as well as in Muktiko-panishad.]

"Verse no. 43-44 = He whose Atma or soul has become perpetually engrossed in and inseparable from Brahm, such a person becomes faultless and taintless. He remains in a state of perpetual trance and inactivity as far as the world is concerned.

When the Vrittis (see verse no 41) of a man remain focused on researching about the uniformity of Brahm and Atma (i.e. when a man diverts all his efforts and energies away from pursuing the world, and instead concentrate it on spiritual enhancement, in finding true peace inside his own self instead of in the external world that is artificial, deceitful and ensnaring), he becomes what he thinks. That is, with persistent and constant contemplation and meditation upon the non-dual concept of the Atma and Brahm, the aspirant becomes firmly convinced of its unequivocal truthfulness, and consequentially has no doubt about it in his mind. He finds

nothing else except pure consciousness as a result of this research and ponderings. He becomes Brahm personified as his own Atma.

This state of blessedness and realisation of the self as pure consciousness is called 'Pragya'. When this becomes a permanent affair, then that state is called 'Jivan Mukti' which refers to being freed from the fetters of ignorance while the seeker is still alive and his Atma lives in the body, which in turn does all the necessary deeds expected of it in this world, but with total indifference and complete detachment [43-44].

"Verse no. 45 = A person who has no attraction towards and attachments with the body and its sense organs (i.e. he is not bothered about his body, whether it is in comfort or is suffering in any way), who has no notion of having any pride of it (such as a healthy and robust body; a strong and handsome body; or that he can achieve difficult tasks with it; or that he can subdue his opponents using the force of his body, etc.), and who treats everything else associated with the body with equal disdain and indifference, such a person is said to be truly 'Jivan Mukta' [45].

"Verse no. 46 = A person who sees uniformity and non-duality between the Jiva (an individual living creature) and Brahm (the supreme transcendental Being), as well as between Brahm (the universal macrocosmic Soul) and the vast creation (in which form that Soul has revealed itself)—such a person is deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' (because he has reached the pinnacle of realisation and enlightenment which has the powers to set one free from the shackles that tie a creature to this entrapping, mundane, artificial and deluding material world; knowledge of the truth is empowerment and freedom). [46].

"Verse no. 47 = Those who remain even and unruffled, those who have profound equanimity and fortitude either when they are being praised, adored and worshipped (for their good deeds, virtues and goodness) by good people, or are being tormented and persecuted by wicked people (because they regard them as obstacles in their nefarious designs), such exalted people are deemed to be 'Jivan Mukta' because equanimity, fortitude and stability as well as steadiness of the mind are possible only when a person ceases to have any ego, arrogance and self pride, and remains indifferent to what this world says about them. It is only then that he will not feel either elated at being praised and honoured, or distressed, dismayed and annoyed at being insulted and hurt [47]."

(6) The *Paingalo-panishad*, canto 3, verse no. 9-11 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition explains what it is like to be in the 'Jivan Mukta' state of existence which culminates in the post Jivan Mukta state called the attainment of the 'Videha Mukti' state. It says—"Just like a lighted lamp is placed in a mud pot where its flame is steady and un-flickering because it is not disturbed by wind, the Atma[1] is also located in the body (i.e. in the lotus-like heart) of the spiritual seeker in the form of a fount or shaft of light that is without any smoke and is equivalent to a thumb in dimension. The great sage or hermit (a Muni) who contemplates and meditates upon this self-illuminated Atma—honoured with the epithet of 'Kutastha' (an entity that is occupying a high place; that is unchanging, unalterable, hidden, secret, imperishable, immovable, steady and constant) and 'Avyaya' (that which does not diminish, which does not decay, which

is infinite and which has no beginning or end)—which has an exalted position and is established in his own inner self or his bosom at the time of going to sleep daily is sure to find liberation and deliverance even while he is still alive in this world. Such a person is indeed called 'Jivan Mukta' (i.e. a person who has found emancipation and deliverance from the shackles that tie a creature endlessly to this world of life and death). He is indeed wise and sagacious, erudite and expert, enlightened and realised. He is indeed praise worthy. He is indeed fulfilled, fortunate and lucky.

If he contemplates and meditates upon this self-illuminated Atma at the time of death, then he transcends even this Jivan Mukti stage and attains a formless state of existence when becomes like an exalted Spirit which has no encumbrances and limitations imposed by a body. This ultimate liberation makes him steady and motionless like wind which has lost its movement and vibrations. That is, after death all his restlessness are calmed down; he has no desires left that would keep buffeting him like gusts of wind that keep the flame of the lamp flickering and swaying form side to side as if it would be extinguished any time. His 'spirit' is calm and tranquil like that air which has no movement or vibrations in it and therefore cannot be felt, though it is always present everywhere nevertheless. This is his ultimate emancipation and salvation; this is his symbolic rest (9-11)."

(7) Paingalo-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 12 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition explains what it is like to be in the 'Videha Mukti' state. It says—"In the final analysis, the soul or Atma transforms into an entity that is without a speech or which cannot be ascribed words to describe it, that cannot touch or feel and can neither be touched or felt, that has no form and shape and therefore cannot be seen, that has no taste or sap and neither can it taste any sap or juice, and that has no smell or fragrance nor can it smell any fragrance. It achieves the stature which is imperishable, that does not decay or diminish, that is without a beginning or is most ancient, that is eternal and infinite, and that is most majestic and stupendous. It attains the supreme transcendental state which is steady and stable, which is pure and immaculate, and which is known as the faultless and healthy Brahm (12)."

(8) The *Tejobindu Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the phrase 'Videha Mukti' assumes a special significance in as much as that it does not necessarily mean leaving one's body in physical terms, but becoming totally detached from it as if it did not exist at all for all practical purposes. As soon as this highly detached and indifferent mental condition is developed, the person becomes immune to anything related with the physical body and it is equivalent to his actually leaving it altogether. It ought to be understood here that an idea expressed in words should be taken in a complete fashion, for it may mean different things under different contexts and circumstances, sometimes appearing to be contradictory to each other if the 'spirit' of that idea is not properly comprehended. The best approach to interpret any great idea or understand the essence of any axiomatic maxim and see it correctly is to relate it in the light of the context in which it is said or expressed without compromising on the basic truthfulness of the idea or maxim which has been expressed in a particular phrase or word by allowing one self to be mired in and perplexed by too literal a

translation of the word or phrase.

A truly liberated soul is one who has understood the import of these two types of Muktis and creates a synergy between the two. Such a person not only becomes 'Jivan Mukta', or freed from the burdens cast by this mundane world, but also attains 'Videha Mukti', or is freed from the encumbrances and limitations caused by the body at the same time. These two types of liberation and deliverance go hand in hand; they complement each other. The best example of a person having both these forms of Muktis simultaneously is the legendary king Janak (father of Sita and father-in-law of Lord Ram) because although he was a king taking care of the mundane work of the kingdom, internally he was completely detached from the world and is considered the most enlightened and wise king that ever existed. That is why he is also called 'Videha'. The concept of various 'Muktis' has been elaborately explained by Sri Ram to Hanuman in Shukla Yajur Veda's Muktiko-panishad.

This concept has been also explained by sage Ribhu to his disciple Nidagh in Mahopanishad, canto 2, verse nos. 37-73, and canto 5, verse nos. 23-41, and by Lord Shiva to Ganesh in Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 33-81 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, amongst other Upanishads.

(9) *Paingalo Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 7 and 15 describes Kaivalya Mukti as follows—

"Verse no. 7 = Whether a wise, erudite and self-realised man leaves his mortal body (i.e. dies) in a pilgrim site or in the household of an impure outcaste, he does not bother about either of them, for once he leaves the body, or once his Pran (the vital wind that supports his life in his body; the breath) leaves the body, he always reaches or achieves the exalted stature of 'Kaivalya' which means that he attains the ultimate state for his Atma or soul, and it is to become one with the supreme Soul of the creation called Parmatma. He has indeed accessed truthful emancipation and salvation notwithstanding whether his body was discarded in a holy place or not (7).

[Note—The reader would appreciate the high thinking of these Upanishadic philosophers who treated all creatures alike, and did not believe in caste discrimination. What more proof is needed than this verse that makes no distinction between dying at a holy place like a pilgrim site or in the household of an impure outcaste called a Chandal. For a world torn asunder with numerous castes and creeds, these words of profound wisdom of the Upanishads should come as a fresh breath of fragrant air. Read on, dear reader, it is certain to enlighten you!]

"Verse no. 15 = Even as water poured into water, milk into milk, and clarified butter into butter become indistinguishable from one another (i.e. both units become one after mixing), the Atma of the creature merges with the supreme Atma (Brahm) and become indistinguishable from it. [This is called the 'Kaivalya state', or the only ultimate state in which the soul would fine its final peace and rest.] (15)."

(10) **Relationship between Mukti and Gyan**:—The *Amrit Bindu/Brahm Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 5 describes this relation as follows—"A wise and erudite man should

endeavour to control or restrain his Mana and train it to inculcate dispassion towards the deluding and entrapping attractions proffered by the sense objects of this material world only till the time the Mana has not been trained to remain focused on the heart and the eternal fount of bliss and happiness that resides in it. When the Mana becomes one with the heart, i.e. when the emotions and thoughts are concentrated upon one object without pulling the creature in opposite directions, it is obvious that peace and bliss are obtained by him.

The dissolution of the Mana in the heart[1]—i.e. when the creature is successfully able to keep his attention focused on his inner self where the fount of eternal bliss known as the Atma resides and prevent the mind from wandering in the external world and attempting to find the illusive peace and comfort there—is tantamount to obtaining Gyan and Mukti by the creature.

Everything else, all other interpretations and connotations of the terms Gyan[2] and Mukti are merely elaborations of this great metaphysical, theological and spiritual truth as expounded in and enunciated by the scriptures. [In other words, turning the Mana away from the material world of impermanence and delusory charms, and instead diverting its energy and efforts to the inner self where the eternal, divine and glorious Atma representing the supreme transcendental consciousness known as Brahm resides, is the main aim of studying and hearing the scriptures. This is the main aim of the scriptures and their teaching, and if this aim is achieved successfully, then the rest become redundant. Otherwise, one can go on reading reams of paper, debating the scriptural texts and listening to decades of innumerable lectures and still achieve nothing worthwhile.] (5).

[Note—[1]Once the Mana plunges into the ocean of bliss, contentedness, happiness and peace bubbling over in the subtle heart where the pure conscious Atma resides, it discovers that these virtues exist there in a much finer, more refined and glorious form that is eternal and infinite as compared to their crude and temporary form it had encountered while it remained engrossed in the external world. Since the Mana had remained attached to the world not for the world's sake but because the latter gave it comfort and pleasure as well as bliss, peace, joy and happiness, when it discovers that these charms of the world are transient and illusionary compared to the new discovery of these same virtues but in a more glorious and splendorous form in the heart itself, it naturally abandons the former and swerves towards the latter. To remain engrossed in something that is attractive is the natural habit of the Mana. So it now gets hooked, literally, to this eternal fount of beatitude and felicity—which are more profound and everlasting as compared to the external ones—present in the creature's own bosom. For searching comfort and pleasure outside, the creature had to make so many strenuous physical labour, but meditation and contemplation required no such strenuous physical labour, so it was all the more attractive to him because the creature has a general propensity to do the least and gain the most from the least physical effort.

[2]Gyan means truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment. In the present context it would be the understanding by the spiritual aspirant that truthful bliss, peace, happiness and joy are not available in the material objects of the external world, but in the deep recesses of the heart when contentedness is obtained by inculcating a high

degree of detachment and dispassion. Gyan entails that the wise creature has come to realise that the comfort and pleasures of the world are transient and impermanent, and that true happiness is obtainable by realising the truthful nature of the eternal and conscious Atma which is present in the heart of the aspirant himself as his 'true self'. Gyan prepares him to realise that this 'true self' of his is distinct from the gross body as well as the subtle mind which are only meant to serve his 'self' represented by this Atma.

There are two other relevant concepts—Gyan Yoga and Gyan Shakti. (a) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature. (b) Gyan gives sufficient power, strength and wisdom to the creature which enlightens it about the good and the bad, about what is beneficial for it and what is ruinous for it. It is the empowerment obtained as a result of acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, sagacity, scholarship and expertise. This is called Gyan Shakti, simply because merely wish and determination wouldn't suffice if a person does not have the required knowledge and skill, the expertise and wisdom to accomplish his objectives successfully.]

(11) The *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 14-18 says—

"Verse no. 14 = Now we shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the Atma has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

[Note—The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 1/2/2 describes the method to overcome these faults of the creature.

Various Upanishads enumerate different Vikaars which are the numerous faults, imperfections, impurities and taints that affect the primary nature and characteristics of the Atma of the creature and impinge upon his behaviour, thinking, temperament etc.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen Vikaars or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual's soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement. The Garbha Upanishad, in its paragraph no. 3 outlines the sixteen faults or flaws that the creature has.

The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 17, describes the eight 'Vikaars' or faults, shortcomings, imperfections and blemishes that cast a shadow on the primarily pure and immaculate nature of the Atma at the micro level of creation,

as well as on Nature at the macro level of creation.

The Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 6 of Rig Veda tradition as well as Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 29 list six Vikaars.

And the Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Brahman 1, section 2, verse no.1 list only five Vikaars.]

"Verse no. 15 = Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).

"Verse no. 16 = It is out of Agyan (lack of correct and true knowledge about the reality; ignorance) that the world appears to shackle the creature. And therefore Gyan (true and correct knowledge as well as erudition and wisdom) is the instrument that can free one from this illusion of shackle and the cause of it, the world.

Gyan is the primary instrument needed not only for obtaining liberation and deliverance from the world and its attendant delusory affects, but also to wisely use the techniques of Yoga and put them to good effect in this direction. It was Gyan that had helped the initiation of creation at the very beginning itself (because to start anything as technical and complicated as the unfolding of this vast and mysterious creation with all its fine intricacies, one needs to be not only aware with its detailed process but be an expert and fully conversant in it besides having a practical knowledge of it in order to successfully proceed with it and attain the desired objective). Gyan is the medium by which one can successfully reach one's destination and accomplish one's objectives in life (which in the present case is obtaining Moksha for the soul, attaining spiritual upliftment and enlightenment leading to one's liberation from the fetters of delusions and ignorance that had trapped the soul in their net). It is Gyan that distinguishes the wise and enlightened creature and sets him aside from the rest of the multitudes (16).

"Verse no. 17-18 = [These verses emphasise what constitutes real and truthful Gyan. Refer Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14 which also describes what truthful Gyan is and what Agyan is.]

That Gyan (knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and awareness) with the help of which one can know about one's truthful 'self' as well as unravel the profound mysteries of existence, is called the real and truthful form of Knowledge.

This Gyan helps one to learn about and experience such unique and eclectic spiritual concepts as Kaivalya (the supreme stature of existence which is the one of its kind and the most exalted state of existence when nothing but the non-dual consciousness is discernible everywhere in the world by the enlightened creature), Param Pada (the supreme stature beyond which there is nothing better; the state of Kaivalya and Pram Pada are synonymous and like describing the same thing using different words to highlight its various virtues or characteristics because both describe the same exalted state of non-dual existence of the consciousness or

Atma of an enlightened ascetic), Nishkal (one that has no variations and fractions; one that has no Kalaas or separate forms and attributes; one that has no imperfections, faults, blemishes and taints), and Nirmal (pure and pristine, immaculate and uncorrupt, untainted and without any blemishes, clean and free of any impurities). This true form of the Atma, or pure conscious 'self' of the creature, is an embodiment of true and eternal bliss and happiness.

True Gyan entitles one to know the truth and reality of the origin, the present establishment and the conclusion of this world, along with the underlying 'consciousness' and 'life-infusing and life-bearing factors' that brings all this about. [This is because only 'living' entities would take a birth, live a life and die. Since this does happen in this world, therefore there must be some imperceptible and hidden element that brings it all about. It is Gyan of the higher order that would enlighten the wise creature about this esoteric and mysterious element known as the pure conscious Atma that works a hidden dynamic force that turns the wheel of creation just like an ordinary science student needs to acquire expert knowledge and high skills to become a renowned scientist when he grows up and takes control of great projects of immense importance.] (17-18)."

(12) Now, let us see what *Muktiko-panishad*, canto 2, verse no.2-74, which describes the conversation between Lord Ram and Hunuman on the same subject, has to say:-

Sri Ram replied, 'Oh Hanuman! The thoughts and belief of the creature that 'it is the enjoyer-sufferer, a doer of deeds, is happy or sad as a result of his deeds', are all due to its mind. This erroneous knowledge or belief (that the creature is the one who suffers, who enjoys, who does) is at the root of all its troubles, miseries and torments in this world; it shackles the creature to the world. The elimination or purging of this fallacious and misleading belief and its accompanying sorrows is tantamount to 'Jivan Mukti' (i.e. being freed from the fetters that tie the creature to this illusionary and deluding world while he is still alive in it).

When the Atma of the creature cracks through the shell surrounding it, the former merges with the infinite space around it. That is, the Atma and the space which represents the fathomless Brahm become one. Such liberation of the soul is called 'Videha Mukti' (i.e. the ultimate salvation of the soul when the body housing the creature is discarded and the soul becomes free from its captivity and merges with the supreme Soul or Brahm which is its parent origin. The situation can be compared to the hatching of a chick from an egg shell). The 108 Upanishads are the authentic proof that the two types of Muktis (i.e. deliverance, liberation, emancipation and salvation)— viz, the Jivan Mukti and the Videha Mukti— do exist.

To obtain supreme bliss, tranquility, ecstasy, contentedness and happiness by eliminating all the sorrows and anguish associated with 'being a doer of deeds' and 'suffering or enjoying their consequences' is the object, aim and objective of these Muktis. It is achievable by diligent industry and sincere effort, perseverance and contemplation.

Even as a son is begot by doing a son-begetting fire sacrifice called 'Putresthi Yagya', wealth and property are generated by commerce and trade, and heavenly abode is achieved by doing the 'Jyotisthom Yagya', one can achieve Jivan Mukti etc. through the process of 'Samadhi' (i.e. a meditative state where trance-like creature becomes unaware of the surrounding world and realises the glory and illumination of the Atma shining inside him, leading to bliss and ecstasy). This 'Samadhi' is possible by inculcating the tenets of the Upanishads in daily life, practicing them rigorously and consistently with firm belief, faith and conviction. Further, it is accomplished when all the Vasanas are eliminated, purged and destroyed. [The word Vasana means—desires, allurements, yearnings, greed, passions, infatuations, attachments, inherent inclinations and temperaments of the creature towards this illusionary and deluding materialistic world.] (2).

A man's efforts are of two types— (a) against or opposed to the guidelines prescribed by the scriptures and (b) in consonant with or according to them. Out of these two, the former is the root cause of all misfortunes, degradation, ruin and doom; pursuing such a path is futile and waste of time and energy. On the other hand, efforts made in accordance to the scriptural guidelines prove to be a boon and give emancipation and salvation. The actual truth cannot be learnt by the creature as long as it has 'Lok Vasana' (i.e. desire for, and attraction towards, this materialistic world), 'Shastra Vasana' (i.e. desire to become expert in the scriptural books and to be recognised and honoured as such), and 'Deha Vasana' (i.e. gratification of the sense organs). That is, these three Vasanas are the obstacles in gaining truthful knowledge about the absolute and irrefutable Reality.

The Vasanas are again classified into two types— good and bad (or auspicious and inauspicious; uncorrupt and corrupt). Oh Hanuman! If you pursue truthful knowledge by the medium or path of good Vasanas, you will get a noble and exalted stature which is equivalent to me. On the contrary, if you fallow bad/inauspicious/corrupt Vasanas, then you will land in great trouble. Oh Lord of the monkeys! You must diligently endeavour to conquer/vanquish accumulated results of past deeds done by you. You should divert the surging river flowing though the various paths of bad/corrupt Vasanas into a channel passing through good/uncorrupt Vasanas. That is, let your thought processes go through good thoughts instead of allowing them to go wayward towards evil and sinful thoughts.

The flow of Vasanas (i.e. inherent tendencies and natural inclinations of the mind of the creature) though the path of evil and bad should be industriously diverted towards a good path/channel because it is a tendency of the mind that it cannot rest and is always in a state of flux. As a consequence, when it is stopped from going towards evil and bad, it will automatically overflow into that channel which is good, and this is true for the opposite situation also. A man should try to tame the mischievous child-like mind most lovingly and courteously, and coax it and allure it into doing what is good, righteous and virtuous.

When both types of your Vasanas begin to disintegrate and gradually vanish, then oh the vanquisher of enemies, you should become assured that your efforts are bearing fruits (3-8).

Be consciously focusing your attention towards good, auspicious, righteous, uncorrupt and noble Vasanas (and keep away from the opposite type of Vasanas). If such good Vasanas are enhanced, they never produce bad results. [That is, if the choice is between good and bad Vasanas, the seeker should opt for the former, but when there is no choice, it is better to divert the mind forcefully towards things which are considered noble and good instead of letting the mind lying idle or allowing it to rest on bad thoughts because the mind can never rest in peace and will automatically, imperceptibly go towards unrighteous Vasanas as they are more pleasing for the gross body of the creature and gratifies its sense organs.]

Oh wise Hanuman! The three— (i) disintegration/purging of Vasanas, (ii) acquisition of truthful knowledge about the absolute reality and (iii) conquering of the mind—produce their good results over a long period of time. Unless these three are practiced simultaneously, one cannot achieve 'Kaivalya pad' (i.e. become one with the supreme Lord; emancipation and final salvation of the soul) even in hundreds of years. If they are practiced separately or in an ad-hoc basis, they do not produce the desired results even as the various Mantras prove useless if not repeated in a proper way. [For example, the letters of the alphabet should be arranged and used in a proper sequence to form a meaningful word, phrase or sentence; otherwise, a fractured structure of the sequence of the same letters will make no sense at all.] If those three (see above) are practiced simultaneously over a long period of time with diligence and patience, the strong knots of the heart are easily untied (or dismantled) just like the strands of a lotus flower fall apart when its stem is split/broken into two.

The worldly desires which are being pursued over hundred of lives cannot be so easily purged and overcome without doing diligent practice as well as making sincere and industrious effort for a long period of time. Hence, oh dear Hanuman, bow before (i.e. say good-by to) the desire for gratification of the sense organs from a distance, and instead of it, you should follow the above three paths as described most diligently and intelligently (9-15).

Erudite ones have called the mind-intellect complex which is full of Vasanas as being tied or shackled, while that which is without it is defined as being free or liberated. Oh great Kapi (i.e. Hanuman)! Bring the mind-intellect complex in the latter category soon. Vasanas are destroyed by proper thought, contemplation and practicing the truth. When the Vasanas are exhausted, the 'Chitta' (i.e. mind-intellect complex) also vanishes like the light of the lamp goes out when its oil is exhausted. He who concentrates unwaveringly on the pure conscious form of me, gets the supreme blissful state of existence and he becomes one with me— whether he does various religious rituals or not. He, in whose heart there is no Vasana, is the one who has been really and truthfully freed; he is really and truthfully exalted (16-19).

Those people who have removed the Vasanas of their mind are not bothered about either doing any deed or not doing it. They do not need to do 'Japa' (repetition of

the divine Mantras) as well.

There is no other stature called 'the supreme state' except the abandonment/ elimination of all the Vasanas and become silent (i.e. a state when all the agitations of the mind, intellect and the heart cease). Though their might be no apparent Vasanas seen overtly, but the tendency of the various sense organs such as eyes to be attracted towards their respective objects are also a form of suppressed or subtle, unapparent and covert Vasana. [That is, the tendency of the eye to look at pleasant scenes is also a form of desire or yearning to satisfy the need to look at pleasant views vis-à-vis unpleasant views.]

Even as the eyes glance at visible things that come its way at random without actually getting engrossed in or enchanted by them, literally 'seeing' them, a patient and fortitudinous seeker carries on with his work in this world without getting involved in it. [That is, the seeker does not get attached with the deeds done by him at the sentimental level; he does all the deeds dispassionately and without bothering about the results, whether they are good or bad, compatible or unfavourable.]

On the son of the wind-God! The imaginary but majestic realms which are generated by the mind-intellect complex of the creature and are favourable to it (i.e. the mind-intellect apparatus finds them alluring; it wishes to delve on those subjects for a long time; they are sufficiently enticing for the mind as well as the intellect to constantly and repeatedly divert their attention towards them) — the erudite sage call these tendencies of the mind-intellect to repeatedly dwell on enticing objects as 'Vasana'. The state of flux or the agitation created in the mind-intellect due to persistent thought of those enticing/pleasing objects, the reality of which are already well known and normally do not qualify for any special attention — they are the cause of birth, old age and death. The Vasanas rock the tranquil boat of the mind-intellect, and this constant shaking and stirring of the otherwise calm, serene and peaceful matter cause further agitations in the mind. In this way, new Vasanas sprout from the seed of the mind-intellect complex. This chain reaction continues (20-26).

The tree of 'Chitta' (i.e. mind-intellect complex of the creature which is also called its subtle body) has two seeds— (i) Pran (the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) and (ii) Vasanas (the compulsive forces that drive the creature towards the objects of this materialistic world at the cost of his mental peace). Out of these, if one decays (or removed), the other follows suit.

There are three ways by which the birth of new Vasanas can be stopped—viz (i) to do deeds without getting involved in them or to do them with dispassion, (ii) to stop thinking unduly about this world, and (iii) to be constantly aware of the perishable nature of this body. And once the Vasanas are annihilated, the mind-intellect complex becomes defunct or inert, i.e. it loses its capacity to generate new Vasanas; it becomes inane.

When the Vasanas are destroyed or purged, the agitations of the mind automatically subside, and this results in the intellect taking over charge of the complex. Since intellect is empowered with the power to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, the

creature is said to have 'wisdom', and with the calming-down of the agitated mind, the creature achieves peace, tranquility, bliss and happiness.

Till the time Gyan (truthful knowledge about the reality) does not light up your inner-self, you should follow the lighted path shown by a wise teacher or by the scriptures. [That is, in the absence of the light generated by enlightenment and self-realisation, you need some help in your spiritual progress; otherwise you will be groping in the dark and might go astray.] Gradually, when you become well-versed in the truth about the absolute, supreme and irrefutable Reality, you should abandon good Vasanas too. (27-31).

The annihilation of 'Chitta' (i.e. the faculty of reasoning and concentration; the mind-intellect complex; thought, understanding, attention etc.) is of two types— (i) one with attributes or forms, and (ii) the other without attributes or forms. In other words, the seekers who are called 'Jivan Mukta'—i.e. those who have freed themselves from the shackles of this delusory world while still alive and living in it, are able to annihilate their 'Chitta' while going about their worldly affairs by being dispassionate and detached towards everything, while those who are 'Videha Mukta'— i.e. have shed their mortal coil (the gross body) and are able to purge the mind-intellect complex for good because they do not have any unfulfilled desires left at the time of death, and therefore have no reason to re-enter the cycle of birth and death.

Annihilation/control/purging of the mind:- Oh son of the wind-God! Now listen attentively about the purging and annihilation of the mind. When its tendency to search, investigate, enquire and debate unnecessarily is calmed-down or subsides, then such virtues as friendliness, mercy, compassion, happiness, detachment and dispassion shall heave in the creature's bosom. The creature will find supreme bliss on the subsidence or annihilation of the Vasanas which are synonymous with agitations of the mind. Agitations never give peace. There is no doubt about it.

Hence, the mind is the root of this vast, colossus world-like tree with thick bark and huge branches, well laden with fruits, flowers and leaves.

The mind is full of 'Sankalp' (i.e. numerous resolutions, determinations, vows and promises, hopes and aspirations). Hence, get rid of these so that the tree-like world loses its charm and gradually dries up. The only way to obstruct the mind's agitations and calm it down is to determine that allowing it to go unleashed will lead to its downfall, will be detrimental to its own good and interest, while controlling it, putting it under leash, will be for its good and welfare.

Gyan helps to control the mind. An ignorant person's mind is like a shackling chain for him. Gyan is like a leash while ignorance is like a shackle (32-39).

The free-run of Vasanas in the heart of the seeker are like the ghosts and phantoms of night. They can be controlled only by conquering the mind by realising the truth of one factor— that is, the entire world is false, the Atma is pure and the only conscious factor, it is blissful and eternal, and it is synonymous with the supreme Brahm.

Those whose mind-intellect complex with its pride, ego and haughtiness have been decimated and the enemy-like sense organs have been vanquished (i.e. controlled), their desire for gratification of the sense organs and infatuations with the world are also completely annihilated just like the lotus flower that withers away itself at the approach of snowfall in winter.

The first task is to exercise control over one's mind-intellect complex by industrious efforts— making an all-out effort to control it by wringing hands, grinding teeth and pressing the body, as it were.

There is no other way to conquer the mind other than sitting-down to contemplate with a focused intellect and concentrating upon the pure-self (40-43).

Even as a wild and intoxicated elephant cannot be brought under control without a goad, the potent and powerful instruments/implements to control the ever agitated mind-intellect are the following— (i) The acquisition of spiritual knowledge, (ii) company of good people, (iii) total forsaking of Vasanas and (iv) the practice of 'Pranayam' (i.e. Yoga exercises in which the vital wind forces of the body— especially breathing process— are controlled). Those people who try to forcible mollify and control the wild and reckless mind-intellect complex by other means are groping in the dark without the light of a lamp, and are trying to tie the elephant with the help of the stem of a lotus flower.

The 'Virttis' (i.e. habits, natural temperaments, inherent tendencies and inclinations) are like creepers and they rely on the tree of the mind-intellect for support and sustenance. This tree has two types of seeds— (i) The vibrations of the wind forces of life (Praan) and (ii) firm resolves and beliefs. The former activates the life that is present in each individual creature. The latter— when properly directed and focused— results in awareness and acquisition of knowledge about the absolute truth and the realty without faltering or stumbling at every distraction and obstacle coming in the path of the seeker/aspirant. This results in liberation and deliverance. Therefore, amongst the means to put a leash on and harness the potential of the mind-intellect complex, the process of 'Dhyan' (i.e. meditation, contemplation, focus of attention on the pure-self and concentration on the truth and absolute realty) as enshrined in and enunciated by the Upanishads has been prescribed as a chief mean or way to do so.

Even if your mind-intellect apparatus is not purged of all faults and impurities (e.g. impure thoughts, corrupt tendencies, worldly desires and passions are not fully expunged), you should still try to contemplate upon the supreme Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal, infinite, absolute and supreme bliss and happiness. This state leads to glory and majesty whereas diversion from this path produces infamy and ruin.

The natural habit of the mind is to remain in a state of flux and take the easy path downhill towards worldly enjoyments and gratification of the sense organs (because spiritual efforts are an uphill task requiring diligence and industry). So, you must constantly try to wean the mind away from going astray down hill, and instead pull it up to focus on the supreme Brahm (44-50).

Till the time the 'Apan Vayu' (the wind passing downwards through the anus; the word also refers to self-praise and pride) is not controlled, the 'Pran Vayu' (the wind force that lifts the soul up, the vital force that drives the mind and intellect as well as the heart of the creature; also meaning the wind filling the lungs and driving up the respiratory tract) cannot rise, and the state called 'Kumbhak' persists. This state is experienced by Yogis (ascetics). On the contrary, when the Pran Vayu is stopped and till the Apan Vayu does not emerge, the stage is called 'Bahaye Kumbhak'.

Samadhi :- When 'Ahankar' (ego, false pride, haughtiness, arrogance, vanity) is destroyed as a result of prolonged practice of 'Dhyan' (concentration and meditation on the absolute truth, the pure nature of the self, treating the Atma as an image of the supreme Brahm and becoming aware of its supreme conscious form), and the natural, inherent tendencies of the seeker become infused with the glorious and powerful current emanating from the supreme Brahm, then the state thus obtained is called 'Sampragyat Samadhi' (a trance-like state obtained as a result of awareness of the truth and acquisition of correct knowledge which enables the seeker/aspirant to lose awareness of the outside world). In other words, when all agitations of the mind cease, the seeker gets into a trance-like state called Samadhi which gives supreme bliss, tranquility, peace and happiness to him. This state is very dear to Yogis. In this state, nothing of the outside physical world is felt and experienced because the mind and intellect cease to exist, all tendencies become extinct, all agitations subside, and instead only the pure consciousness survives. During this period, the intellect is freed from all encumbrances and stays in proximity of the pure consciousness called the 'Chidatma' (or the eternal, enlightened soul or Atma). It is in direct contact with and under guidance of it. The supreme, complete and absolute Brahm, who is Truth personified, is experienced everywhere during this period. This stage of Samadhi is equivalent to emancipation and salvation while still living in this world (because it gives the same bliss and happiness which the creature obtains on the final merger of his soul with the supreme Brahm after death). It has been enunciated by Brahma (the creator) himself. It is, therefore, equivalent to 'Kaivalya Samadhi' or the ultimate bliss which is obtained when the creature realises the only and absolute Truth about his Atma and the supreme Brahm being one and the same (51-56).

Further definition of Vasana:- The tendency of the mind-intellect to firmly accept apparent outwardly appearances of any object instead of determining its true and real nature is called the fault of the 'Chitta' and is also called 'Vasana'. Oh the best amongst the monkeys! The mind-intellect complex comes between the Atma and the gross body of the creature consisting of the sense organs. In other words, the Atma receives the inputs of the outside world through the medium of the organs of perception; these inputs are then monitored by the mind-intellect complex; the results are passed on to the organs of actions in the gross body of the creature. The Atma has minimal role to play in this setup. However, when the mind-intellect, which is saturated with Vasanas (like water in sponge), interferes with the input, the results of the output are also influenced by the Vasanas. When the

Vasanas are completely exhausted, the inputs are under direct control of the intellect, which in turn is in direct control, contact and command of the Atma/soul of the creature. Hence, in such a situation, the Atma is able to direct the actions through the medium of the intellect and control the actions of the creature. Since the Atma is pure, the instruction that it issues are also pure and it leads to righteous actions of the creature. The former type of perception of the Atma is called 'Moha' (delusions; here the word means biased, distorted and untrue view of the world). The situation is akin to an intoxicated man— though he sees everything around him but his views and perceptions become distorted and out of context (57-60).

Again, Vasana is of two types— (i) uncorrupt and pure, (ii) corrupt and impure. The latter throws the creature into the whirlpool of birth and death while the former liberates it from it. Wise people say that the impure/corrupt/darkened Vasanas are embodiments of 'Ahankar' (pride, ego, haughtiness, arrogance etc.) as well as 'Agyan' (a treasury of ignorance and delusions).

Just like a seed is unable to generate into a new plant after being roasted, the purging and destruction of Vasanas relevant to this world also prevent re-birth of the creature. Hence, one should be like a roasted seed. Oh the son of the wind-God (Hanuman)! What is the benefit of fruitless and endless debates over the scriptures— they are like crushed nuts or gram seeds. The same effort should be diverted towards searching for the inner light of enlightenment, a light which is eternal and provides a solution to the darkness caused by ignorance.

Oh the lion amongst monkeys (i.e. the king amongst monkeys)! Those who are unconcerned about their fame, and instead, concentrate on their inner-self and remain silently engrossed in it— they are not only experts in the supreme knowledge of the Brahm but are also deemed to be equivalent to Brahm himself (61-64).

Even after studying the four Vedas and numerous 'Shastras' (scriptures), those who do not know the essence of the supreme Brahm are prevented from enjoying supreme bliss, contentedness, tranquility and happiness just like the ladle does not know the taste of food inspite of it being present in the latter. Those who do not get detachment and repugnance even after smelling the stinking smell of their bodies (e.g. the foul odour coming out from a dead body), say, what other knowledge or teaching can be given to them so as to create a sense of repugnance and detachment from their gross and perishable bodies. The body is full of filth while the Atma is very pure (65-67).

Those who are tied to various Vasanas (i.e. desires, yearnings, inclinations and attachments) are shackled while the destruction of Vasanas is called liberation and deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Hence, even the desire to get liberation and deliverance as well as emancipation and salvation should also be abandoned because it is also a form of Vasana.

To start with, first abandon the Vasanas generated in the mind (such as the very tendency of the mind to seek or desire anything), then those pertaining to the physical

body (such as gratification of the sense organs). After that, you must abandon even the Vasanas for emancipation and salvation. This will give immense peace and tranquility to you. You should be compassionate and loving towards all, and at the same time, concentrate your mind towards your pure and conscious form which is your true identity.

Oh Maruti! At the end, you must forsake from your mind even this desire to concentrate on your pure-self and, consequentially, become established in my supreme and divine form (i.e. become one with me, or merge with me) (68-71).

Oh the son of the wind-God! You must worship my form which is indescribable and is beyond the reach of words and comprehension. It cannot be touched or felt, is formless and attributeless, is bland and without any smell/odour, is never corrupted and tarnished in anyway, is without any name or clan or caste or creed, and which is the eliminator of all the sorrows, miseries, troubles, tribulations and torments of the creature.

Oh Hanuman! He who is the witness to all, is fathomless and measureless like the sky, the knowledge of whom leaves nothing more to be learnt, who is without a birth, is one and unique, is unattached and has no encumbrances, is all-pervading and all-encompassing, is the best and the most exalted entity, is the personification of the three syllables of the divine word OM (i.e. A, U, M), who is free from all forms of fractionalization (i.e. he cannot be partitioned, fractured or structured into separate segments), is non-dual, is the essential nature of things, is the embodiment of the primordial sound 'OM', and is the imperishable and eternal Brahm— that is me! I am the witness/observer, am pure and uncorrupt, never become tainted or subject to any faults (i.e. I am without blemishes and without reproach), and there is nothing other than me which can become the object for my attention. I am complete in myself, above and below, inside and outside. You must contemplate on this form of mine (72-74).

(15) Maya:— Maya is a word which has two parts, Ma + Ya. The first half means a 'mother; a progenitor; something that creates', while the other half refers to the 'notion of doubt, of either this or that; the notion marked by uncertainty'. The word 'Ma' also means 'to measure, mark off, by any standard; to show, to exhibit, to display; to infer, to conclude; to be formed, built, made of'. Therefore, the composite word Maya refers to a situation which harbours uncertainties, where it is uncertain whether what is said or understood or seen or witnessed or experienced is actually the truth or not. It is virtually the 'mother of all confusions and perplexities'. It therefore refers to something or some situation which creates or produces perplexities, doubts and confusions, something that is not real; that which is deluding, illusionary, deceptive, mirage-like and deceitful, and is caused by the ignorance about its truth and reality; something that has no substance or pith; displays no certainty and leads to wrong inference. The term Maya is used to define all these complex phenomena at once. Hence, Maya is a synonym used for all that is deceptive, faulty, false, deluding, ignorance-based, illusionary, deceitful, invisible and super-natural in the sense that it defies all logic and understanding; all that which has no reality or substance inspite

of appearing to be for real; all that is hollow and lacks gravity though appearing to be solid and dense. It creates hallucinations in a creature's mind leading him to believe that what he sees is the truth. It is the deluding and magical dynamic powers of the supreme transcendental Lord that hides the reality and creates an imaginary world of deceptions and misconceptions.

Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that Brahm employs to create delusions.

Maya is the deluding power of the supreme Authority in creation known as Brahm that has been used by him to create the sense of duality. The factual position is that everything is one and the same, and the different views of them is simply an illusion just like one sees a mirage in a desert and thinks it to be real whereas everyone knows that it is a physical phenomenon created due to the effect of excessive heat on desert sand, and it is the deluded mind that thinks it to be real though it is well aware that such things do happen in a desert and it is wise advice not to follow this illusion. Likewise, when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation, he had to create a smokescreen of delusions to enable him to hide the truth, because otherwise everyone would renounce this world of artificiality and become recluses, and the result would be everyone becoming a monk, renouncing the world and the resultant termination of the cycle or birth and death! So under the influence of Maya or delusions, the living creature thinks that it, the Jiva, and Ishwar, the Lord, are two separate entities. The Jiva offers prayers to the Ishwar and looks upon him for his benevolent mercy and intercession in order to survive and prosper in this competitive world; the Ishwar looks upon the Jiva to offer him oblations and worship that would sustain and nourish the former as well as keep him in an exalted and honourable position. There exists a mutual symbiotic relationship between the two. The Jiva lives on the earth, while the Ishwar lives in the heaven. The Jiva watches the exalted stature, glory, fame and powers that the Ishwar possesses, and so the Jiva tries to acquire that stature for himself. Therefore the Jiva does good and auspicious deeds to go up to heaven, but the deeds themselves pull the Jiva down because of their inherent and inbuilt nature to tie down anyone who gets involved in them. So the creature continues to oscillate like a pendulum between being a mortal being living on earth and the immortal being living in the heaven.

This is the theory of 'duality'. Both are covered in an invisible veil of ignorance-based delusion. From the metaphysical point of view, Ishwar is the sum total of all the causal bodies that exist in creation, while the Jiva is represented by the individual causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma or soul. This factor of the 'pure conscious Atma or soul' is common to both the Ishwar and Jiva, and hence to treat them differently is a stupid proposition caused by deluding effects of the mind. This is called being sheathed by a veil of Maya, or being under the influence of ignorance that prevents one form realizing the truth and reality.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse no. 25 describes the concept of the Maya Shakti and how Brahm employs it to create an illusion of duality in something that is non-dual. To quote—" He whose eclectic form is eternal and whose authority

is well established, he who has revealed himself as the whole creation which is nothing but his own form, he who is self-illuminated and revealed in the form of light, he who is uniformly all-pervading, all-encompassing, universal and omnipresent—it is this unique and non-dual supreme and transcendental Brahm who has revealed himself in four forms by employing his cosmic power to create illusions, known as the 'Maya Shakti'. This Shakti enables Brahm to conjure up a magical world of miraculous finery and clarity that is so life-like and a virtual reality that one is unable to distinguish between its illusionary form and the actual reality that it hides. This is why the four forms of the same Divinity known as Brahm are given four different names. Actually, they are the same Brahm appearing in all these four forms.

[It is like the same 'sky' being assigned different names depending upon its location—viz. the sky in an empty pitcher is called a 'Ghata-kash' ('Ghat' = pitcher; 'Akash' = sky), that within the walls of a monastery is called 'Matha-kash' ('Matha' = a monastery), that above the earth as the 'Akash', that beyond the gravitational pull of the earth as the 'Maha-kash', etc. But these are artificial boundaries created for the sky element which is otherwise an immutable, an indivisible, a uniform and a universal entity.

Another example can be cited of water contained in different containers or vessels being assigned different names—for instance we say 'the water in the cup', the 'water of the jug', the 'water of the river or the ocean' etc. Primarily, all samples of water are the same, and these different names do not change its basic nature or quality.

These four forms of Krishna are Gopal, Pradumna, Balraam and Aniruddha. There is no wonder in it. If Brahm can create this magnificent and fantastic world of stupendous variety and diverse aspects, shapes, colours and forms that continue to evolve endlessly and defy all imagination, it is a only child's play, so to say, for him to replicate himself in merely four forms when he can replicate himself in millions and countless more million forms in this vast and endless creation.] (25)."

Tulsidas asserts in his epic *Ram Charit Manas* that a person who has firm faith and devotion for Lord Ram is untouched by Maya. This has been affirmed in the context of Bharat when it is said that Lord Ram and Sita are enshrined in the heart of Bharat like a deity is enshrined in a temple, and wherever there is the sun there can be no trace of darkness—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 295.

Maya is afraid of a person who has Bhakti (devotion, love, affection and surrender) for Lord Ram in his heart because the Lord is especially caring for such a person, and Maya is scared of the Lord because Maya itself is a humble maidservant of the Lord—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 15.

Maya has three subtle forms, hence it is called Trigunamayi Maya. These forms represent the three basic constituent qualities of creation, called the Gunas, that give Maya its inherent nature and characteristic quality. These three Gunas are—Sata, Raja and Tama. 'Sata' is the most auspicious, virtuous and noblest quality in a man and raises him to a high moral and spiritual pedestal. It marks predominance of righteousness and the highest standards of spirituals and

mental evolvement leading to high thoughts, noble actions and righteous behaviour. 'Raja' is the medium quality in a person, and it is marked by worldly passions, desires, yearnings and greed. It makes a man more worldly than spiritual. 'Tama' is the third and most lowly of the three qualities and is used has a synonym for darkness and evil. Obviously, 'Tama' means ignorance, delusions and all the forces or qualities that are evil, mean, lowly, miserly, wicked and base. They pull down a man from high pedestal and virtually dump him in the dust yard of creation to rust and decay.

These three qualities together, in various permutations and combinations, decide the innate nature of a man. The greater presence of 'Sata' makes a man nobler as compared to a high ratio of 'Tama' which makes him wicked, pervert and evil. Various proportions of these qualities will therefore produce innumerable varieties of creatures having different temperaments, thought processes, behaviours, demeanors and mental setup in this world.

When a man understands any 'Truth' after rigorously examining the 'truthfulness' of that truth, when he has established the veracity of facts, he believes in it more firmly and more convincingly. No matter what other people tell him about the truth being not the correct or the whole truth, he would not listen to them, simply because he has verified the facts for himself, he has witnessed the truth himself, he has logically eliminated all falsehoods to deduce that what he knows is the 'truthful Truth'. His Truth is based on rigid and solid foundation; he is unwavering and steady in it. If he is steadfast and convinced in his knowledge, no matter how much ignorance and delusions (Maya) try to push him away from the absolute 'Truth', he will remain steadfast and unwavering in it. There will be no doubts and confusions in his mind.

The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man in unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted consonantly. This is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Maya nevertheless hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time assuming the glorious attributes of Brahm itself. So ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue to it . As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of Maya.

The 'Trigunamayi Maya' is further classified into three sub-classes—viz. Sata Guni Maya, Raja Guni Maya, and Tama Guni Maya. This nomenclature depends upon the dominance of one or the other of the three Gunas in any given situation. Thus, when the Maya is dominated by the Sata Guna, it is called 'Sata Guni Maya'; when it is dominated by the Raja Guna, it is called 'Raja Guni Maya'; and when it is dominated by the Tama Guna, it is called 'Tama Guni

Maya'.

The *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 10, describes these three types of Maya as follows—"The Maya that has the Tama Guna in dominance is represented by Rudra (the angry form of Shiva that brings about destruction and annihilation of creation).

The Maya that has the Sata Guna in dominance is represented by Vishnu (the sustainer, protector and the benevolent care-taker of creation).

The Maya that has the Raja Guna in dominance is represented by Brahma (the creator who indulged in the tricky job of creating all sorts of delusions and illusions, as well as the world with all its material sense objects and the subjects that would populate it and enjoy it, thereby keeping the creator engrossed in its magical charms).

The Maya that has a combination of the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna dominating in equal proportion, with the Sata Guna taking the back seat, is represented by Indra and other Gods. None of the Gods in the countless number of Gods in the pantheon can be said to possess Satvic qualities—i.e. none of them can be cited as an example of exemplary qualities of virtuousness, nobility, auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, holiness, piety, purity, chastity, incorruptibility, trust worthiness, sincerity, honesty and other good virtues that the Sata Guna stands for.

Out of this pantheon of Gods it is only Lord Aghor (Shiva) who stands out as being neutral, full of equanimity and indifferent to the effects of one or the other Gunas in the true sense. [That is, he is not at all influenced by the dominance of one or the other Gunas. His character is absolutely steady and untainted because it is not at all affected by the characteristic influences of any of the three Gunas. This is why Lord Shiva is equated with Brahm, the Supreme Being. This is also why he is called 'Maheshwar'—the Great Lord, an epithet not even applied to Vishnu who is so loves the creation.] (10)."

The Atharva Veda's *Krishna Upanishad*, verse nos. 4-5, however, gives a slightly different view of Maya vis-à-vis the three Gunas as follows—" Maya (the dynamic power of the Supreme Being to create delusions) is said to be of three kinds—viz. Satvic, Rajsic and Tamasic depending upon the ratio of the three Gunas that is dominant in any one of its three aspects. Out of these, the Satvic Maya is said to be the foremost and the first one, the Rajsic the second one, and Tamsic the third and the lowest one.

The Satvic Maya is the dominant character of Lord Shiva, also known as Rudra, who is the most ardent and the wisest devotee of the Lord. [This is why Lord Shiva is also known as Mahadeva, the Great God. Inspite of his cosmic role as being the ruthless and uncompromising concluder of creation, he is known to be of an exemplary calm disposition and peaceful temperament, submerged always in contemplation and meditation. Sata Guna inculcates the great virtues of renunciation and enlightenment in the entity that possesses it, so Shiva is the most dispassionate and enlightened of all the Gods. This makes him the patron deity of ascetics.]

Brahma, the creator, has Rajsic Maya as the dominant character. [Raja Guna is concerned with creation and constant involvement in it. This is the function of Brahma.]

The demons had the Tamasic Maya as the dominant character. [Tama Guna creates the tendency to be evil and sinful, characters unique to the demons.]

Thus, Maya is said to be of three kinds, and since the entire creation is a product of Maya it too has these three characteristics in it.

Besides these three forms there is the Maya which is the primary form of Maya from which these three have evolved. This primary Maya is directly related to Lord Vishnu, hence called the 'Vaishnavi Maya'. It is sort of the parent of all the other forms of Maya. It is so powerful and so strong that no one can ever defeat it; not even Brahma the creator could overcome it. [This is the reason why Brahma, though being the creator of the Vedas—which are supposed to be a repository of all knowledge in creation—could not comprehend who Narayan or Vishnu was. This fact is amply clear in Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad in which Narayan himself taught the creator the truth of his (Narayan's) divine Self.] (4-5)."

The Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 9-10 describe the effects of Maya, verse nos. 15-18 the relationship between Maya and the Atma, and verse nos. 44-45 the fact that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma as well as of Brahm. Now let us examine these verses and learn more about Maya—

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 9-10 = It is on the inspiration and command of the Lord that the eyes see things having forms and colours; it is on his orders and empowerment that the ears hear sounds. Similarly, all other sense organs work expressly on his command and are regulated by him. They are inclined to remain engrossed in their respective objects in the external world because the Lord has created them so that the Atma can perceive the beauty, the majestic charm and the magnificence of the creation crafted by the Lord through their medium.

[Since the Atma is a microcosmic personification of Brahm that lives in the gross body of the creature, it follows that it is actually Brahm himself who enjoys the sights of the world created by no one else but him. The Lord plays with his own creation through the medium of the Atma and the gross body of the creature in which this Atma lives!

The different sense organs of perception (such as the eye which sees, the nose that smells, the ears that hear, the tongue that tastes, and the skin that feels and touches), as well as the organs of action (such as the hands that do deeds and receive anything, the legs that take Brahm albeit in the form of the resident Atma to its designated place, the mouth that helps Brahm to speak and eat, the excretory organs that helps Brahm to get rid of waste from its immediate vicinity inside the body, and the genitals that helps Brahm to reproduce the world and help it sustain its own self perpetually) are the instruments employed by Brahm to interact with and sustain the world of his own creation.

But it has been asserted in the Upanishads that the Atma is inherently neutral and dispassionate. So how and why does it get involved in the gross body through the medium of the above organs? The answer is that it is influenced by 'Maya'—the power of delusions. That is, the Jiva (living being) who is deluded and overcome by Maya is the one who gets involved

or indulgent in the world, and the Jiva who is wise and enlightened is freed from this fetter. It is Maya that shrouds the Jiva's intellect and mind and makes him behave as if he is ignorant of the Truth though his 'truthful self' happens to the wise and enlightened Atma. This is the great paradox of creation.]

This inclination of the sense organs to be attracted towards their respective objects is due to Maya—i.e. by the dynamic power of Brahm which makes falsehoods appear to be real, thereby making the sense organs think that the objects of the world which they pursue are true and real, and that they would derive true pleasure and joy by being associated with them or being in their company. The sense organs are the instruments that the Atma, as a representative of Brahm residing inside the creature's body, uses to 'see', to interact and to sustain the gross world of material sense objects.

The desire of the creature to swerve towards the sense objects of the world is due to this affect of Maya, and it is not the creature's inherent and natural inclination. [This is because the true self of the creature is the Atma which is inherently dispassionate and wise. It has no desire for material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects of the mortal world. But when Maya intervenes as the spoil-sport, the Atma gets deluded, and thereby it loses its pristine purity and becomes tainted.] (9-10).

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 15-16 = A wise person who has realised that the Maheswar (Brahm) is an entity that is beyond the grasp of any of the sense perceptions of the gross body as well as the various faculties of the subtle mind-intellect complex, should discard taking recourse to rationality, logics and proofs to realise Brahm. Instead, he should concentrate on realizing Brahm by the medium of his inner-self—i.e. by contemplation and meditation, by turning inwards and focusing his attention on the pure consciousness that is self-illuminated and which resides in his bosom, rather than searching for Brahm in the external world. It is only then that he can attain true knowledge of Brahm, or become truly 'Brahm-realised, wise and enlightened'.

It is the Atma that is self-illuminated, while the external world of Maya (or the world generated by delusions of the mind) is enveloped in darkness. Whereas the Atma is an embodiment of light and enlightenment, Maya on the other hand stands for darkness, delusions and ignorance.

[In other words, when a spiritual aspirant turns inwards in search of the 'Great Truth', he discovers an entity that is self-illuminated, radiant and glorious as the celestial Sun. This is the Atma. Like the Sun that can be said to the virtual Lord of the solar system, this Atma is also the Lord of the microcosm known as the Jiva, the living being. Microcosm exists because there is a 'macrocosm'; one logically proves the existence of the other. For instance, if there is a day then there must be a night, and vice-versa. So, if the Atma is a Lord of the Jiva, its macrocosmic counterpart would naturally be the Lord of the whole existence at the cosmic plane. The latter aspect of the omnipresent, ubiquitous, all-pervading, immutable and immanent Atma is therefore called 'Maheshwar', the supreme Lord the seeker was searching for when he had set out to find the truthful Lord of creation who is the ultimate and the supreme Authority. This Lord is

known as Brahm, the Supreme Being.

Since the Atma is a representative of this Supreme Being residing in the inner-being of all the creatures, it follows that it is also Maheshwar. It is like the case of the same sky being assigned two different names of Ghata-Kash and Maha-kash by the virtue of the sky's ('Akash') location inside the body of a hollow pitcher ('Ghat') and outside it respectively.

The Atma is like the flame of a lantern or a candle. This flame itself is self-illuminated, splendorous and a brilliant source of light; this flame illuminates the surrounding world by its light. Sans this flame, the surrounding area would be in pitch darkness. Similarly, the world would be enveloped in a thick veil of darkness if the Atma—the living factor of life known as the 'consciousness'—were not present in it. To draw a parallel from the physical world, the latter would be a sea of darkness if there was no Sun to light it up.

From the metaphysical point of view, the outside world is dark because it is the creation of Maya—the power of this Maheshwar to willfully create a veil of delusions around himself. Why would the Maheshwar do so is answered in verse no. 1 of Kanda/Canto 1.

By corollary, Maya can be removed by its own creator. The clue to the creation of Maya is with the Maheshwar (Atma at the micro level, and Brahm at the macro level of creation), and therefore it is the Maheshwar himself who can dismantle it. This simply means that Maya can be overcome by the Atma itself should it decide to do so, and hence it also follows that the Jiva, the living being, is himself to blame for the shroud of delusions that he has weaved around himself because this Jiva's truthful 'self' is the Atma.

The colourful world of fascinating charm and variety that is observed is actually a tapestry of delusions that the Maheshwar has created himself.] (15-16).

[Note—Earlier it has been said in Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 6, as well as in Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 21, 24, 28 etc. that the Atma, known as the Hans, is like the Sun and the Pranav. The 'Sun' is the only self-illuminated body in the whole of the solar system. Space voyages in modern times has established beyond doubt that the outer space is completely dark. The sky that we see as lighted from earth during the daytime is actually due to refraction of sunlight from the uncountable impurities present in the atmosphere of the earth. But just outside the upper surface of the earth's atmosphere, in the bottomless vacuum of the outer space, the sky is absolute dark even though the same Sun is shining at the same place as before.

The other word 'Pranav' refers to the background sound in the cosmic space. Science has shown that there are a number of factors for this cosmic humming, such as the magnetic field around the revolving planets, ionized solar wind blowing in outer space, and other physical factors. It has been observed that a grave humming sound is heard just outside the earth's outer atmosphere which makes it appear that the earth is groaning as it slowly revolves around its axis. We do not hear this sound on earth because of the surrounding pollution created by terrestrial noise, but since there is absolute quiet in outer space this subtle sound becomes stark against the all-pervading calmness.

Now we come to 'Brahm'. The term Brahm applies to 'everything', without exception, that exists in this creation, and obviously therefore both the noise and the

quietude come within the ambit of 'Brahm' as do the Sun and the Pranav! In other words, the Sun and the Pranav are one or the other aspects or facets of the ubiquitous Brahm. This is the picture at the cosmic plane of existence.

The void of the space has no life par-se, so the mysterious entity, which we like to call the inexplicable forces of Nature, that keeps the hanging celestial bodies in their fixed place in the universe, that keeps the Sun burning eternally without any replenishment in its stock of fuel, which creates sound from nowhere, which created the elements from nothing—is known as Brahm. Since something that has no life, vitality and dynamism in it cannot produce any other thing—dead entities don't create—it follows that this Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that is regarded as the seed of life and creation. This is the rough picture at the cosmic level of creation.

At the microcosmic plane, this Brahm is revealed as the 'consciousness', the essential life-infusing spark, that resides inside the gross body of the creature who represents the creation in a miniature form. This 'consciousness' is called the Atma as it is the most fundamental and basic entity without which the creature's very existence as a 'living being' known as the Jiva would be questioned and jeopardized. The word 'Atma' means 'the soul, the essence, the basis, the fundamental, the principal and the elementary form' of anything.

Since the Atma not only lights up the inner being of the body with the light of life and consciousness but is also self-sustaining and self-illuminated, it is likened to the celestial Sun. Again, since the dead and the inane entity known as the body gets its power to live by the beating of the heart, the beating which creates a subtle thumping sound as well as a silent humming or whispering as the blood flows through the blood-vessels inside the body, the Atma is also likened to the Pranav, the cosmic background sound.

Elsewhere it is said in the Upanishads that the Sun is a visible manifestation of Brahm because the latter represents the brilliance and magnificence of the glories of Brahm. In this context, refer to the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 4. The Surya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 3 asserts that all forms of life on earth depend upon the Sun God. The Narayan Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1 says that he was born from Lord Narayan, i.e. Lord Vishnu. The same thing is asserted in Brahmo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1 which states that Aditya, the Sun God, is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu. But this is understandable because Vishnu and the Viraat Purush is the same Lord having different names according to the degree of subtlety and the scriptural text one is referring to; both are synonymously used. Whereas the Viraat Purush was the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm that appeared in the first stage of creation when Brahm decided to initiate it, he was called Vishnu at a little later stage when the visible creation was just about to be initiated, because it is from Vishnu that Brahma the creator was born who later gave shape to the creation itself.

Brahm in metaphysical context refers to the pure consciousness that has two levels of existence—one is the macro level, and the other is the micro level. At the macro level this refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is universal and uniform throughout

this creation, and this fact that the cosmic Consciousness is the Supreme Being himself personified is endorsed in the Atharva Veda's Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 56. At the micro level of creation, the term 'consciousness' refers to the individual's Atma, his soul. This Atma is his truthful 'self'.

In the context of the present verse of our Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, it is stunning to note that the Sun that is so blazingly splendorous lives in a space of the outer sky filled with overwhelming darkness. This is how the idea of the 'Maheshwar being surrounded by darkness of Maya' originated!

It ought to be noted here that inspite of this all-engulfing darkness in outer space, the Sun continues to shine brilliantly, and any object that is turned towards the Sun too gets illuminated. In other words, inspite of the world being submerged in the delusions created by Maya, those who turn towards the 'truthful Brahm' get enlightenment and wisdom inspite of all odds stacked against them. But if they turn their back towards Brahm, they would see only miseries and insurmountable problems of life instead of hope and salvation!]

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse nos. 17-18 = There is never a similarity between the self-evident and cognizable Atma, and the illusionary and deluding Maya.

It is well known and established by doing self research, applying of logic, contemplating and pondering deeply, separating fact from fiction, intelligent analysis and wise derivation of the truth that the supreme Atma, which is consciousness and self-illuminated, has nothing to do with Maya at all.

The debates about the truthfulness or otherwise of anything in this gross material world of sense objects that are marked by delusions are limited to the world. Such debates are the subject matters revolving around Vidya (knowledge, skill and expertise in any given subject) or A-vidya (the opposite of Vidya). It has no bearing on the Atma which is beyond the purview and jurisdiction of either the Vidya or the A-vidya for the simple reason that the Atma is an ethereal entity that transcends the defining boundaries of the gross world (17-18).

[Note—The Jiva, i.e. the living being, is either aware of things in this world or is unaware of them. The state of existence when the Jiva is aware of this world and its objects is known as 'Vidya' or knowledge and awareness, while the opposite would naturally be 'A-Vidya' or lack of knowledge and awareness. In the field of spiritualism, knowledge of the truth of the Atma is known as 'Vidya', and its lack is 'A-Vidya'.

Now, since the Atma is said to be eternally self-illuminated and enlightened, to cast doubts on its inherent divinity and greatness as well as its existence comes under the definition of 'A-Vidya', while to be sure and convinced of the same is categorized as 'Vidya'.]

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 44 = Any Authority is established by its inherent and intrinsic dynamic powers, strength and potentials. When things are subjected to certain laws and regulations it is a sign that there is some Authority to control and regulate them. In other words, since the creation has an in-built regulatory mechanism that controls each and every phase of existence, it is too obvious to doubt that there is an invisible Authority that gives effect to this

control and regulation mechanism. This 'Authority' is Brahm. Brahm and Authority are not separable from one another; they are synonymous with each other (just like a king and his royal authority are inseparable from one another and synonymous with each other).

Brahm is the 'Supreme Authority' in creation inasmuch there is no Authority beyond Brahm. Brahm is the only Authoritative Being in creation. Brahm is the Authority that has the power and the authority which are inviolable and sacrosanct. The fact is that there is no 'Authority' other than Brahm in this creation—and that makes Brahm 'supreme'.

It is also a fact that Maya (delusions) has no real existence. [Maya is an instrument in the hands of Brahm to exercise his authority over creation. It is Maya that helps Brahm to keep the wheel of creation rotating endlessly by keeping the creatures deluded and trapped. When the time comes for winding up the creation, Brahm exercises his 'authority' and removes the smokescreen of Maya. This smokescreen can also be voluntarily removed by Brahm-realised persons because they are themselves Brahm personified!] (44).

"Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 45 = Wise ascetics realise that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma that resides in their inner-self.

[In other words, they realise that no one else is to blame for the web of delusions that they have created around themselves voluntarily. This is because their Atma is their truthful 'self', and it is this Atma that has created the Maya.]

However, this Maya and its negative and deluding effects are blocked by the knowledge of Brahm. It then appears only as a neutral entity that is as ineffective as an image or reflection seen in a mirror.

[In other words, those ascetics who are Brahm-realised are not affected by the negative influences of Maya. The latter seems to exist in this world because for the simple reason that the world exists, as without the Maya this world cannot exist. Maya and the artificial world go hand-in-hand; they co-exist. In other word, both the Maya and the world are imaginations of the mind; if the mind so decides, both would vanish. Maya has any relevance only till the time a man acknowledges the presence of the gross world—because the latter is a product of the former. But once he becomes enlightened enough to understand that the world is imaginary and therefore non-truth, it is a natural corollary that the relevance of the Maya is done away with. Instead of delusions, he begins to see the 'truth' everywhere. And this 'truth' is Brahm. Therefore, for a Brahm-realised person Maya ceases to exist, and with its cessation the world also ceases to exist.

This is all there is to Maya's importance and influence; it does not go any further than this point. It does not affect the inner-self of the wise ascetic who is freed from its cunning tricks, who understands that if he so determines he can easily overcome both the delusions and artificiality created by his imaginative mind.

This is why Brahm-realised and self-realised ascetics become enlightened and empowered enough that they can see the secret 'truth' in the same world in which other ordinary men cannot!

The reflection of any object that is seen in a mirror appears to be as true and real as the object itself, leading to so perfect a delusion that a man who does not know the real situation would begin to believe, after sometime, that the reflection or the image seen in the mirror is the object itself. This man forgets that what he sees is simply a 'reflection or an image' for the simple reason that the medium of seeing the object under question is a 'mirror' that has the grand virtue of creating a perfect image of the real thing.

When a wise man sees an image of an object in a mirror he immediately knows that there surely must be the object somewhere in the vicinity. So he looks around to find it, and then he is able to have a sight of the real thing. Say, is it not foolish to run behind the water seen in a mirage during a hot summer afternoon in desert even if one comes across a real source of water close at hand?

Therefore, is it not foolish to run behind the mirage-like world seeking peace and happiness when one knows that it is imaginary and misleading, as well as transient and perishable, instead of attempting to realise the 'spiritual truth' that would bestow him with peace and happiness that are not only everlasting but have depth and profundity as well.

The 'image or the reflection' seen in a mirror is never the real thing though it appears to be so. Similarly, when the supreme Truth (the cosmic Consciousness revealed in the form of 'life' in this creation) is seen against the background of Maya, it appears in the form of the visible gross world. When the same Truth is seen with the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment, it appears in the form of Brahm. Again, while the term 'Brahm' refers to the Truth at the macro level of creation, the same Truth is referred to as the 'Atma' when considered at the micro level of existence.

Hence, to conclude, a Brahm realised man sees this world as a reflection or an image of Brahm. It is in the mirror of existence that he sees Brahm being reflected. Therefore, even if the world is removed Brahm would still be there—just like the case of an object remaining in place even if the mirror that reflects its image is removed from sight.] (45)."

The *Atma Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 26, 28-29 are very explicit in the principle that all the spiritual problems that are created for a Jiva, the living being, are the cause of Maya, and that by eliminating Maya he can easily overcome them. To quote—"verse no. 26 = How is it possible that an enlightened and a highly realised ascetic who has virtually become Brahm personified after having attained high degree of self-realisation and its attendent enlightenment ever take a birth again because creation and its expansion are the effects created by Maya (the powers of Brahm to create delusions) which this ascetic has already conquered and eliminated from its roots.

All fetters and bondages having their genesis in Maya, and all obstacles that this Maya creates in the path of one's Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance) would no longer apply to an ascetic who has eliminated Maya as a stepping-stone to Brahm-hood.

[The very fact that he is 'wise and enlightened', the fact that he has developed a high degree of renunciation and detachment from the world as well as the body and their respective allurements and temptations is due to his having vanquished Maya. Elimination of Maya is a

pre-requisite for being Brahm-realised in the first place. Hence, when Maya is trounced, there is no question of this creation ever raising its evil hood again. All the problems are created when one is not aware of the truth and is instead enveloped in a shroud of ignorance and delusions. For instance, a man becomes terrified when he sees a length of harmless rope when he thinks, out of ignorance of the truth and its attendent delusions, that it is venomous snake. He is also horrified to see a lifeless cuticle of a snake if he does not know that this cuticle has no life in it and is simply a dead piece of discarded skin. But once he becomes aware of the truth, he loses all fears of these two things.

All spiritual problems are created by Maya; the Jiva (the living being) is subjected to all spiritual torments and mental dilemmas because he is embraced by Maya. When he breaks free from its clutches he is like a slave finding his final freedom from eternal slavery. Under the overpowering influence of Maya, he had erroneously treated his gross body as his 'self', and had treated the world as real and truthful. When this Maya is eliminated, then obviously this erroneous notion is dispelled and the light of true knowledge shines through much like the brilliant rays of the sunlight breaking through the shroud of thick cloud to illuminate the world, which in this case is his inner self. Say, how can the darkness of ignorance and its accompanying phantoms and ghosts live when the bright sun shines? He realises that his 'self' is not the body but the pure conscious Atma, and that this Atma is an eternal, sublime, ethereal and a holy Spirit as compared to the gross body which has characters that are the opposite of those possessed by the Atma. For instance, the body dies and perishes while the Atma is an eternal and imperishable entity. He understands that birth and death are limited to the gross body and have no relevance vis-à-vis the Atma.

He also realises that this Atma is a microcosmic image of the macrocosmic Atma of the entire creation, and that the latter is known as Brahm. That is why when a self-realised ascetic proclaims 'I am Brahm' he is speaking an absolute truth without any pretensions and deceit.

The Atma in its cosmic form is known as the 'Parmatma', the supreme Atma. Neither the Atma nor the Parmatma ever takes a birth or dies.] (26).

"verse nos. 28-29 = Brahm has no pretensions and coverings; it has no deceit, conceit and falsehoods associated with it. Therefore, it is the unadulterated and naked 'truth' that has no distortions whatsoever.

Whether or not one believes in the existence of anything is actually the function of the intellect and the mind. It is the mind-intellect that decides for a creature whether anything exists or does not exist in this world.

This intellect-mind complex is a subtle part or component of the gross body which is like a covering of the Atma, the pure consciousness, representing Brahm. The fact of the matter is that Brahm has no such thing as a mind-intellect complex for the simple reason that Brahm has no gross body with its various components, including the subtle component known as the mind-intellect.

Therefore, Brahm, the pure cosmic Consciousness, is never deluded, is never confused and is never in any doubt about the 'truth' of anything, including this world. One of the obvious reasons for this is that Brahm is the one who has created this world by employing his own

dynamic powers of creating Maya and has employed his own Shakti (powers, authority and energy) to give it its shape. Therefore Brahm clearly knows the secret of this world; he is aware how it has come into being; he is privy to its hidden mysteries.

Because of the fact that the Atma (the pure self) of a living being is none else but this Brahm in a personified form, it follows that a wise and self-realised person knows that this world is false and imaginary; that it is a creation of Maya and its stupendous maverism known as Maya Shakti. He allows his 'self' to interact with this world only to the extent that is absolutely necessary for him because he has to live in it till the time the Atma has completed its journey and reached its destination. This 'destination' is final spiritual liberation and deliverance, final emancipation and salvation—which are collectively called 'Mukti'.

By corollary, once the world becomes irrelevant for a self-realised and enlightened man, his body too becomes equally irrelevant. This is because both the body and the world are gross and a part of the creation of Maya which has trapped his soul in its vice-like grip.

Since all delusory notions arising out of Maya that make the existence of the world possible (like the case of a snake existing in the rope) are functions of the mind-intellect, it follows that the Atma has no such conceptions arising in it because it is free from Maya and its effects, as the Atma is naturally and intrinsically highly enlightened, self-illuminated, knowledgeable and wise.

In other words, only when the Atma is under the influence of Maya does it regard the world as true, meaningful and relevant. Once the veil of Maya and its grip is removed, the Atma is able to perceive the truth of the world—and this 'truth' is that the world is imaginary and entrapping; it is the result of the imagination of the fertile mind, the mind that makes a man think that the rope is a snake!

When the stupidity and ignorance of the mind and intellect are done away with, both the fallacious conception of the rope being a snake, and the inherently false world to be true are done away with. Thereafter only the truth prevails, and this 'truth' is the spirituality of the 'self' which is nothing but the pure consciousness known as the Atma.

So we conclude that when Maya is removed, the Brahm (in its personified form as the Atma of the living being) is convinced that the world is false and gross by nature (28-29)."

The *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse nos. 33, 44-45 describe how Maya creates this world.

"Verse no. 33 = Only those whose inner-self has been thoroughly cleansed of all sorts of faults and shortcomings (associated with life in this corrupt mundane world embedded with delusions and ignorance), and is thereby rendered holy, untainted and pure, are eligible to receive or accept or see or witness and experience the supreme transcendental Divinity (Brahm) which is self-illuminated.

Those who are covered in a veil of Maya (delusions) cannot ever expect to have a divine sight or view of the supreme Lord (33).

"Verse no. 44 = Any Authority is established by its inherent dynamic powers and potentials. When things are subjected to certain laws and regulations it is a sign that there is

some Authority to control and regulate them. In other words, since the creation has an in-built regulatory mechanism that controls each and every phase of existence, it is too obvious to doubt that there is an invisible Authority that gives effect to this control and regulation mechanism. This 'Authority' is Brahm. Brahm and Authority are not separable from one another, they are synonymous with each other (just like a king and his authority are inseparable from one another and synonymous with each other).

The fact is that there is no 'Authority' other than Brahm in this creation. It is also a fact that Maya (delusions) has no real existence. [Maya is an instrument in the hands of Brahm to exercise his authority over creation. It is Maya that helps Brahm to keep the wheel of creation rotating endlessly by keeping the creatures deluded and trapped. When the time comes for winding up the creation, Brahm exercises his 'authority' and removes the smokescreen of Maya. This smokescreen can also be voluntarily removed by Brahm-realised persons because they are themselves Brahm personified!] (44).

"Verse no. 45 = Wise ascetics realise that Maya is a creation of the Atma that resides in their inner-self.

[In other words, they realise that no one else is to blame for the web of delusions that they have created around themselves voluntarily. This is because their Atma is their truthful 'self', and it is this Atma that has created the Maya.]

However, this Maya and its effects are blocked by the knowledge of Brahm. It then appears only as a neutral entity that is as ineffective as an image or reflection seen in a mirror. [In other words, those ascetics who are Brahm-realised are not affected by Maya. The latter does exist in this world because for the simple reason that the world exists, as without the Maya this world cannot exist. But that is all there is to Maya's importance and influence; it does not go any further than this point. It does not affect the inner-self of the wise ascetic who is freed from its cunning tricks. This is why Brahm-realised ascetics can see the 'truth' in the same world which other ordinary men cannot!] (45)."

The Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 33, 36, and Canto 5, verse no. 77 describe Maya as follows—

"Canto 4, verse no. 33 = The Lord of creation known as Maheshwar, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, is merely a neutral witness to everything without getting involved in any of the things and deeds in this world, without either enjoying anything or suffering from anything.

This Maheshwar is self-illuminated. Any sense of duality or difference or dichotomy that exists between this Lord and the Jiva (the creature) is imaginary, and only out of the interfering Maya (delusions about the reality and truth).

When the Maya corrupts the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious), the creature begins to think that such difference does exist, while when this Chitta is freed from the corrupting influences of Maya, these imaginary views vanish (33).

"Canto 4, verse no. 36 = It (Brahm; consciousness) lives as a self-illuminated entity inside the body (of the creature as the latter's Atma), and is a witness to everything.

This eclectic and divine entity is witnessed and experienced by a Jiva (living being; a creature) who has become thoroughly clean and uncorrupt, and all the faults and shortcomings of whom have been completely eliminated.

On the contrary, when the Jiva is surrounded or covered by a veil of Maya[1] (delusions and its accompanying ignorance) he is not able to have any knowledge or awareness of this self-illuminated consciousness (representing Brahm) that is present in his inner-self. [This is like the case of a lamp being covered by a dark sheath. The light from the lamp would not be able to light the surrounding area, and any person standing even very close to the lamp would be in the same pitch darkness as the one who is miles away from it. This covering of Maya so much deludes and corrupts the mind-intellect and the sub-conscious that one begins to hallucinate and is unable to 'see' the truth from behind the curtain of falsehoods and illusions.] (36).

"Canto 5, verse no. 76 = The fact that though Brahm is characterized by the grand virtue of being non-dual, immutable, indivisible and constant (which is a steady refrain of all the Upanishads) it still appears to be in numerous forms that are always changing and so divergent in nature by revealing itself in the form of this world that has mind-boggling number of uncountable forms is because of the factor of Maya (i.e. the delusion-creating power of Brahm) that acts as a conditioning element that tampers with the real Truth. [That is, Brahm appears to be so different, or having a dual nature, because of the interference of Maya. This Maya creates an artificial distortion and prevents the reality to be known. It hides the Truth behind the smoke-screen of fallacious thinking, imaginations, delusions and misconceptions.]

It must not be forgotten that the Atma is fundamentally 'one' and 'non-dual', or Advaita, because it is Brahm personified.

[That is, it must never be thought that two individuals having two different gross bodies would have two different Atmas; that therefore there are as many 'selfs/selves' as there are creatures. The Atma is always 'one' and not 'two or more'. The uncountable number of creatures is simply the uncountable number of bodies that this single Atma has assumed for itself.

The simplest way to understand this concept is to take the example of water. A molecule of water consists of two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen, and its chemical formula is H_2O. For a chemist water would always mean H_2O, but a layman would differentiate between a sample of water in a cup and that in the river.

Water is also known by different names—viz. as liquid water, as any viscous fluid, as ice, vapour, moisture, mist, cloud or rain, as river, stream, sea, ocean, well, pond, lake and so on. But a wise man knows and understands that all of them are one or the other form of the same element called 'water' having the same chemical formula.

Similarly, a wise and enlightened man would know that the Atma in all the creatures is one, and therefore such a man would treat all the creatures alike. On the contrary, an ignorant man would think that all creatures are independent individuals, and that they have separate identities that are unique to them. Of course this latter notion is superficially true because this world is conditioned by Maya to treat the external gross body as the identity of all living beings, but fundamentally it is wrong and based on fallacious premise. This is because the 'true self' of

all the creatures is their Atma, the pure consciousness residing in their bodies, and not the gross body itself.]

Therefore, the Atma is universally Advaita or non-dual and one. The Atma has no delusions and misconceptions. It is not at all affected by any of the taints and delusions so characteristic of this gross world (76)."

The eight forms that Maya takes—The eight forms of Maya are the delusion and ignorance creating powers of Brahm without which the creation would neither be conceived nor expanded, because if everyone becomes aware of the reality, if everyone realises that everything is perishable and immaterial, that whatever is seen and enjoyed are like a mirage seen in a desert, then all would renounce the world, there would be no marriages and procreation, there would be no creation of wealth and strife and tension to protect this wealth, there would be no desire to have dominance over others, for all are equal and one in the eyes of Brahm and they have the same Atma which prevails uniformly in the breadth and length of the creation. So Brahm uses Maya as a tool to maintain a veil of ignorance and delusions to carry forward his game plan, until the time he decides that he had had enough of it and then initiates the folding-up process of concluding this creation for good, or for at least that time when he decides to roll the carpet once again.

Now, these eight forms that Maya takes are the following—the five elements forming the basic building blocks of the gross creation (i.e. the elements of earth, water, fire, air and space which form the gross body of all the living creatures) + mind + intellect (together called the subtle body of the creature) + Ahankar (the ego, pride and arrogance that the creature possesses, leading to the notion of 'I', 'me', or 'mine' = eight entities.

Actually, a wise man understands that whatever exists in whatever form is nothing but one or the other form of the same universal entity known as Brahm. To take an example, a scientist knows that water in whatever form and colour and shape consists of the same two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen. Further, he also realises that everything is made of atoms and their basic structure consists of sub-atomic particles such as electron, proton, neutron etc. With this erudition and view point, a wise man sees these basic ingredients in all things that he observes around him, because everything is made up of atoms and molecules. But an ordinary man talks of the water of the ocean, of the well, of the drain and of the river etc. He talks of gold, of silver, of wood or of iron, not realising that all consist of the same building block called the 'Atom'. Similarly, due to ignorance a man is deluded into thinking that the gross world that he sees is has an independent existence and it is real. He forgets to analyse its fundamental ingredient which is the pure consciousness that is making it alive. The five elements that are used to make up this world are all perishable and gross, and they are the creation of the mind. The mind itself is perishable because it dies with the body. Then, what is the reason why a man has so much ego and pride in himself and his abilities? It is Maya. It is his ignorance that has held him by his collars, as it were. He forgets that if his true self is imperishable, then how come he dies; if his true self is enlightened and wise, then why he suffers from so much misery and

disillusionment; if his true self is eternal, then why does he have to take a birth and then die? A wise man then begins to ponder why does he treat those entities which are transient, mortal and the cause of so much misery and consternations and confusions as true; why does he not realise that the truth is imperishable and eternal and universal? This is due to the influence of delusions and ignorance created by Maya. This is how Maya keeps everyone trapped under its net.]

Maya has three names—viz. (a) Maha Maya—or the great powers exhibited by Brahm at the cosmic level. This Maya is the progenitor of all other types of Mayas which keep the individual creature trapped in their net. The Maha Maya is the virtual mistress of all the delusions and misconceptions and their attendant ignorance that keep all the creatures of this creation enthralled by their deceptive charm. (b) Yog Maya—this is the stupendous magical powers created by the union of the supreme authority of creation known as Brahm, and the mystical and esoteric powers that delusions and hallucinations can create for the creature. (c) Maya Shakti—this is the 'shakti' or power and authority displayed by Maya in association with Brahm from whom it acquires its stupendous energy and powers.

The *Sita Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition says that Goddess Sita is a manifestation of the Maya Shakti of Brahm—as 'Yog Maya' in verse no. 3, and as 'Maha Maya' in verse no. 5.

In order to understand the term 'Yog Maya', let us examine its two component parts—viz. Yoga and Maya. 'Yoga' means meditation and contemplation, while 'Maya' refers to the cosmic energy and delusions created by the Lord at the time of creation. 'Yog' also means union or conjunction or fusion of two entities. Therefore, Yogmaya refers to the fusion of the cosmic energy with the delusion-creating powers of the supreme Brahm when he did decide to start the process of creation. The illusion created by him removed the distinction between the truth and falsehood so much so that both appeared the same and became interchangeable. That is why, what appears true on the surface is actually false, and vice versa. But to enable this to happen, Brahm had to meditate and focus his attention to ignite that inherent but latent energy that is an integral part of creation. In other words, he had to do Tapa, which is another form of Yoga. The resultant stupendous forces of Nature that were unleashed by Brahm's meditation led to the chain of events that culminated in the revelation of the cosmos as it is known today. This magnificent event or the primary force that set this chain in motion has been conceptualized by the Purans as a deity known as 'Yogmaya'; she has been depicted by them as the female counterpart of the maverick Lord of creation, who has been personified as the Viraat Purush. In the case of Lord Ram, who is that Viraat Purush also known as Vishnu, that Yogmaya is represented by Sita. The other connotation of 'union' implies that this Yogmaya establishes a link between the ignorant and deluded creature, and the unadulterated, supreme and ultimate Truth represented by the Lord. The word also refers to the magical and mystical powers displayed by mystics and ascetics, which they have acquired by the virtue of their meditation

and contemplation.

We can understand this phenomenon of how the Maya of the Lord has created this vast canvas of creation with a simple example. A painter wishes to paint a landscape. He starts with a pure white canvas, and using his imagination and powers to visualise a magnificently beautiful scene, he starts painting with numerous primary colours and then goes on mixing these colours to produce umpteen numbers of colours of varying hues and shades. Besides the colour, he continuously adds a stroke here and a brush there as he tries to reveal on the lifeless canvas the conception of life as he visualises in his mind; he is never satisfied with his work and goes on and on endlessly adding colours and lines to the canvas. The result is most astounding and stupendous to behold. But still the painter is not satisfied; so the net result is that the canvas gets being redone over and over again, and layers after layers of lines that had been made and erased, of paints that had been painted over numerous times, of shapes and figures that had been visualised, rejected and reconceived and placed on the canvas only to make the painter uneasy about them. In short, the basic canvas that was pristine pure at the beginning has been reduced to scrap! The painter then keeps it aside or if totally disgusted with it, he may throw it in the garbage bin.

This all but sums up how the supreme Lord creates, develops and concludes the creation. The clean white canvas represents the Satwic qualities with which the Atma starts out. The painter is the supreme Lord or Brahm, the landscape he imagines is equivalent to Maya because it has no actual existence but is imagined by him, and he is so skilled a painter that once the painting is ready, the scene that is depicted on the canvas appears to be very real and live, creating an illusion of the grandeur of the actual thing; this is a deception because the painter has used his imagination as the subject of the painting, but an ignorant man who is not aware of this fact would believe that the painting has been inspired by some actual landscape that the painter must have seen somewhere. As a matter of fact, it might also happen that the scene does actually exist, but the painter has added touches of his own imagination to add vibrancy and colour to the scene about which the observer is unaware. The scene and the 3-dimensional landscape is equivalent to the creation and the colourful Nature. The paint and the primary colours used by the Lord during the process of creation to make it vibrant and lively are the different Gunas (virtues, qualities and characteristics), the various Vasanas (desires and passions) and Vrittis (inherent tendencies and inclinations of a creature; his nature and temperaments) as well as the Tattwas (elements) which are fundamental to and inseparable from creation. The innumerable varieties of shades of characters, virtues and qualities that are present in the creature represent these myriad colours that the creator uses to paint his creation. Until at last the Lord stands back and is stumped at the Frankenstein Monster that he has unleashed! Then he decides to call it quits, and this is equivalent to annihilation of the creation. But as a painter he cannot sit quiet; and so starts the process once all over again!

Supposing the painter did not add his own name to the painting, or he had added a pseudonym. Then in such a case, there would be conjectures about his identity, leading to so many theories and debates. Then some wise man would look up the archives and dig up some evidence about who he was. This is exactly what happens here in the case of creation—no one knows for sure who that creator is, what is his name, etc. Some wise and enlightened man came to unearth the truth about him, and he tried to tell others in the words he could muster. This is how the great maverick Lord has been known and recognised by us. When his glories are sung, it is actually praising the great painter for his skills and the matchless heritage that he has created for us to cherish and behold.

The *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 9, says that Maya is a revelation of the dynamic powers and glories of Brahma, the creator, on display. It is a manifestation of Brahma in the sense that it reflects his dynamism and glories to create wonders out of nothing and real-life illusions that resemble the truth so much that it is hard to distinguish the false from the truth.

Maya is also said to be of three types, called the 'Triguna Maya', because of the dominance of one or the other of the above three Gunas in any given situation. Thus, when the Maya is dominated by the Sata Guna, it is called 'Sata Guni Maya'; when it is dominated by the Raja Guna, it is called 'Raja Guni Maya'; and when it is dominated by the Tama Guna, it is called 'Tama Guni Maya'.

The *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 10, describes these three types of Maya as follows—"The Maya that has the Tama Guna in dominance is represented by Rudra (the angry form of Shiva that brings about destruction and annihilation of creation).

The Maya that has the Sata Guna in dominance is represented by Vishnu (the sustainer, protector and the benevolent care-taker of creation).

The Maya that has the Raja Guna in dominance is represented by Brahma (the creator who indulged in the tricky job of creating all sorts of delusions and illusions, as well as the world with all its material sense objects and the subjects that would populate it and enjoy it, thereby keeping the creator engrossed in its magical charms).

The Maya that has a combination of the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna dominating in equal proportion, with the Sata Guna taking the back seat, is represented by Indra and other Gods. None of the Gods in the countless number of Gods in the pantheon can be said to possess Satvic qualities—i.e. none of them can be cited as an example of exemplary qualities of virtuousness, nobility, auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, holiness, piety, purity, chastity, incorruptibility, trust worthiness, sincerity, honesty and other good virtues that the Sata Guna stands for.

Out of this pantheon of Gods it is only Lord Aghor (Shiva) who stands out as being neutral, full of equanimity and indifferent to the effects of one or the other Gunas in the true sense. [That is, he is not at all influenced by the dominance of one or the other Gunas. His character is absolutely steady and untainted because it is not at all affected by the characteristic influences of any of the three Gunas. This is why Lord Shiva is equated with Brahm, the

Supreme Being. This is also why he is called 'Maheshwar'—the Great Lord, an epithet not even applied to Vishnu who is so loves the creation.] (10)."

The *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad,* Canto 2, verse nos. 33, 44-45 describe how Maya creates this world.

"Verse no. 33 = Only those whose inner-self has been thoroughly cleansed of all sorts of faults and shortcomings (associated with life in this corrupt mundane world embedded with delusions and ignorance), and is thereby rendered holy, untainted and pure, are eligible to receive or accept or see or witness and experience the supreme transcendental Divinity (Brahm) which is self-illuminated.

Those who are covered in a veil of Maya (delusions) cannot ever expect to have a divine sight or view of the supreme Lord (33).

"Verse no. 44 = Any Authority is established by its inherent dynamic powers and potentials. When things are subjected to certain laws and regulations it is a sign that there is some Authority to control and regulate them. In other words, since the creation has an in-built regulatory mechanism that controls each and every phase of existence, it is too obvious to doubt that there is an invisible Authority that gives effect to this control and regulation mechanism. This 'Authority' is Brahm. Brahm and Authority are not separable from one another, they are synonymous with each other (just like a king and his authority are inseparable from one another and synonymous with each other).

The fact is that there is no 'Authority' other than Brahm in this creation. It is also a fact that Maya (delusions) has no real existence. [Maya is an instrument in the hands of Brahm to exercise his authority over creation. It is Maya that helps Brahm to keep the wheel of creation rotating endlessly by keeping the creatures deluded and trapped. When the time comes for winding up the creation, Brahm exercises his 'authority' and removes the smokescreen of Maya. This smokescreen can also be voluntarily removed by Brahm-realised persons because they are themselves Brahm personified!] (44).

"Verse no. 45 = Wise ascetics realise that Maya is a creation of the Atma that resides in their inner-self.

[In other words, they realise that no one else is to blame for the web of delusions that they have created around themselves voluntarily. This is because their Atma is their truthful 'self', and it is this Atma that has created the Maya.]

However, this Maya and its effects are blocked by the knowledge of Brahm. It then appears only as a neutral entity that is as ineffective as an image or reflection seen in a mirror.

[In other words, those ascetics who are Brahm-realised are not affected by Maya. The latter does exist in this world because for the simple reason that the world exists, as without the Maya this world cannot exist. But that is all there is to Maya's importance and influence; it does not go any further than this point. It does not affect the inner-self of the wise ascetic who is freed from its cunning tricks. This is why Brahm-realised ascetics can see the 'truth' in the same world which other ordinary men cannot!] (45)."

The *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 49 describes *why it is important to overcome Maya* in these words—"Only those persons who have cleansed their inner self of all taints and blackening soot created by Maya (representing all sorts of delusory and ignorance-based conceptions and misunderstandings pertaining to the actual reality and truth) are able to see the reflection or image of the Supreme Being in their inner self. This image is as glorious as its principle who has his own self-created body (i.e. who does not live in some other body like the creature's Atma which lives in another gross body when it takes birth in this world), is self-illuminated, and is the universal witness and observer of everything in this creation (which implies that he is present everywhere, inside and outside of everything, at the same time, and also in all phases of time such as the past, the present and the future).

Therefore it follows that those who are covered by the veil cast by Maya and tainted by its evil shadow of deceit and illusions can never hope to see this glorious Divinity shining in their inner self (49).

[Note—It is like the case of seeing the image of the sun or the moon in a mirror. If the mirror is clean, the image would be perfect, and the dirtier or the more tarnished the mirror is the more unclear and distorted would the image be.]"

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 describes the *relationship between Prakriti, Maya and Gunas* in a very succinct manner as follows—"Prakriti (primary Nature) should be treated as the Maya, and the supreme Lord called Maheshwar (one who is 'Maha'—great, and 'Ishwar'—Lord, of everything) as the maverick Lord who inspires and enables the Maya to not only create this world but also imprint it with its own characteristic qualities (much like the offspring bearing the characters and features, or genes, of the parent).

Thus, the entire creation bears the characteristic qualities and virtues so typical of and unique to Maya; these qualities and virtues form an integral character and nature of this creation as a whole as well as of all its individual units. [They are called the various Gunas.] (10)."

Mantriko-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes Maya in substantial detail. In its verse no.5 it says that Maya has *three basic colours*—viz. 'white', 'red' or 'dark', and the various shades in between. These three colours represent the three basic qualities, called Gunas, present in all the creatures and are only symbolic of the innumerable variations in which the basic qualities can combine to produce countless number of characteristics and virtues and behaviours that give individuality and specific characteristics to millions and millions of creatures. These are simply metaphors only meant to explain and help visualise certain things, and therefore should not be taken too literally as meaning that dark skinned people are sinful and pervert and worthy of condemnation, or that fair skinned ones are all righteous and noble, for just the opposite is witnessed daily in our lives.

Even as an offspring gets the colour of the skin of the race to which it belongs, the inherent characters of all creatures are inherited from their mother, and this mother is Maya. The white colour stands for the best category of qualities called Sata Guna, the red

colour stands for the second and medium quality called Raja, and the dark colour stands for the meanest quality called Tama. The word Tam itself means 'dark' and it stands for the worst type of qualities leading to sinful and pervert nature in a man which makes his life hellish; the word 'red' is a metaphor for anger, vehemence, vengeance, agitations, restlessness, short temper, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy and the other such negative worldly characteristics in a person; the colour 'white' stands for peace, tranquility, prosperity, happiness and wisdom, all of which are the characters of noble and gentlemanly persons.

Here it should be noted that the three inherent qualities or Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama that characterize all the creatures of this creation are like the genes that the offspring carries of its parent. Through these Gunas, the Maya resides in the bosom of all the creatures as their defining 'nature' and basic 'temperament'—called the Prakriti of the creature. Even as the supreme Brahm as the Great Lord called Maheshwar used his mystical deluding maverick powers to create this illusion of the world at the cosmic level and made it so perfect that it appears to be perfectly true, the same Brahm while residing in the bosom of the individual creature as its Atma also creates this world by using its delusion creating powers, and uses its man-Friday, the mind, to ensure that it is implemented to perfection.

The effect of Maya on the creature has been elaborately dealt with in *Mantriko-panishad*, verse nos. 3-8 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and in *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 52-53, 69, 71, 74.

Now let us examine what the *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2 has to say on the subject—"verse no. 52 = The existence of such delusory and fallacious perceptions as 'duality' (i.e. separate existence of the Jiva and Parmatma; the Ghatakash, the Mathakash and Mahakash as being separate from the Chidakash) are known to and recognised by only those exalted and wise ones who are experts in the Vedas and are well conversant with their divine knowledge.

They recognise the fact that everything that is done at the behest or instigation of Maya (delusions and artificial notion of truth) would automatically cease when the Maya itself is eliminated by acquisition of correct knowledge of the truth and reality. Then there would be no sense of duality, and consequentially there would be no such concept of a Jiva and Parmatma—i.e. there would be no sense of dual existence. [This is a very objective conclusion—it is a matter of common sense that 'truth' can be only one and not more than one. In the event that two things appear to be true and exist simultaneously than there must be something seriously wrong somewhere—for there cannot be two truths and therefore one is an imposter. This situation does not apply to 'falsehood', for this entity can have thousands of variations and all of them would be 'truly false'! The philosophy of the Upanishads espouse and expound that the Atma and the Parmatma are the same albeit viewed at different levels of existence, the former at the level of the individual creature while the latter is viewed at the level of the creation at large. This Atma in all the living beings is the same like the water molecules in all water bodies known by whatever names is the same. This world is a visible manifestation of the cosmic Atma known as Brahm which is nothing but Consciousness personified.] (52).

[Note—The concept of Maya has been described in note to verse no. 69 of Canto 2 of this Upanishad below. Refer also to verse nos. 53, 56, 71.]

"verse no. 53 = When this enlightened state of existence is reached, one perceives only the eternal, truthful and non-dual 'consciousness' in its absolute and purest form. He is firmly established in this eternal truth and perceives his 'self' as this pure consciousness.

An enlightened and wise person develops the high level of thinking that makes him realise the truth of the fact that just like the sky or space cannot be fragmented into separate segments (such as Ghatakash, Mathakash, Mahakash etc.) because it is inherently immutable, indivisible, universal and uniform, so is the case with the pure consciousness revealed in the form of the 'self'. This eclectic knowledge makes him identify himself with the vast world around him, and he expands his world view to include the entire creation, and stops having a limited and selfish view concerning only his body and its vested interests.

He realises that just like the sky is assigned artificial names (such as Ghatakash and Mathakash etc. as in verse no. 50), the two names given to the Atma or consciousness as Jiva and Parmatma, or as the inanimate and animate world, are also artificial and not reflective of the truthful nature of things[1]. These two states of existence or being are attributed to the Atma because of the interference of Maya. The latter creates a smokescreen that hides the truth. As soon as this smokescreen of Maya is removed, the truth comes to the fore. This 'truth' is the pure and only one certainty known as 'consciousness' (53).

[Note—[1]The Jiva is referred to as 'inanimate' because it has a gross body which is inanimate and inert. On the contrary, the Parmatma is referred to as 'animate' because it has the word Atma—or consciousness—in it. This leads us to a very interesting deduction—the Jiva is alive only because it has the consciousness—or Parmatma—residing inside its body. Shorn of the 'animate' Parmatma, the Jiva would be 'inanimate'.]

"verse no. 69 = If one does not develop the high level of wisdom and erudition that is expected of him by studying the scriptures then he would still be deluded and think that the all-pervading and omnipresent Brahm can be attained by doing certain specific auspicious deeds for the purpose (such as doing penance, observing austerities and religious vows, giving alms and donations or holding religious ceremonies, going on pilgrims and observing sacraments etc.). [That is, this person who has not understood the fundamental principle behind the concept of Brahm—that this is a unique invisible entity which is eternal, ever-present and divine that is present even inside his own self as his Atma or pure conscious soul—would try to obtain access to it by adopting so many methods as described in the numerous scriptures. Such persons forget in the process that they need not do anything external to find the ultimate fount of bliss and the source of spiritual liberation, but to search for it inside their own bosom and realise the fact that the object of their search is residing very much in their own self as their Atma, their 'pure conscious self'. The same Brahm also resides outside their body in the entire creation in a uniform and universal way, without exception. In other words, such ignorant persons are deluded enough to treat an entity known as Brahm that is inherently divine, sublime, subtle, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and ubiquitous as being

subjected to the limiting effects of things that exist in this mortal and perishable material world that is gross, inane and inert under the false impression that the world depicts the true form and nature of Brahm. They do not understand that what they see is the half truth and not the whole truth. They see only the exterior of the world and think that it is Brahm; they do not have the depth of wisdom and erudition or the aptitude to see what lies behind the exterior. Hence they are deemed to be deluded and under the influence of Maya as described in verse nos. 52-53, 56 and 71of this Canto 2 earlier.]

Proper study and understanding of the scriptures would help to overcome the lack of wisdom and erudition that has been carried down to this life from the past life as the man's fate, destiny or lot—called 'Praarabdh'. As result, when he develops proper level of erudition and wisdom he would be able to eliminate this illusionary and fallacious conception about Brahm, the body and the world that arises out of ignorance of the truth and reality.

In other words, he would be able to overcome Maya in all its three connotations[1] (69). "verse no. 71 = When the 'Praarabdha' (i.e. one's destiny, fate and lot that he has inherited from his past and which has landed him in his present condition) is completely exhausted, the Jiva (living being) is able to shed his mortal coil (body) and free himself from its fetters.

All forms of Maya (worldly delusions and ignorance that had been shackling him for so long)—and even the knowledge that this Maya exists at all—arising out of the Praarabdha are also eliminated simultaneously[1].

It is only as long as this Maya exists that one perceives this deluding and artificial world of material sense objects. As soon as Maya is eliminated, the artificial world is eliminated as well. What remains is something that is not illusionary or deluding—i.e. Brahm, the ultimate Truth, the unequivocal Absolute and the undisputed Reality of creation (71).

[Note—[1]The creature takes a new birth because his deeds of the past life have left a burden of unspent and accumulated effects that are yet to be suffered or enjoyed by him. Besides this, the unfulfilled desires and passions force him to take a new birth in the hope of completing his unfinished task in the new life. Then, during his new life, the Jiva indulges in fresher deeds and accumulates, even without his knowing, newer bagful of effects. The past dogs him to the present and tampers with his natural temperaments and thought processes; his mind and intellect become biased and prejudiced. It is like the case of a man who is already biased and mentally prejudiced sitting upon the judge's seat to decide a case—his judgment would naturally be partisan, biased, lop-sided, distorted and not objective. The prejudiced intellect and mind of the man, under the influence of his past—his Praarabdha—would not be able to act independently, and this would in turn distort his way of thinking, his present way of life and dealing with its complexities. He would not be able to 'think straight and analytically' because the mind and intellect are tainted and handicapped by pre-conceived ideas and convictions that have been firmly ingrained in them as a baggage brought forward from the past.

It is here that company of wise men and study of the scriptures come in handy. A man who is fortunate enough to have this privilege is able to know the reality, he would be able to see his own faults and shortcomings himself in the mirror of the teaching of

the scriptures, and if he is indeed wise and sane he would realise his past follies and taking cue from the maxim that 'it is never too late to make a start' he would now strive hard to at least mend his future if he can't do anything about the past. So, he would try to dispassionately consume his past baggage of effects of deeds that he had inadvertently and in his utter ignorance allowed himself to be burdened with, a burden that has hitherto hindered his spiritual progress, and sincerely strive not to accumulate any new one further from now on. This is easily achieved by him by remaining mentally and emotionally detached from the deeds in the current life and understanding that the doer of deeds is the gross body which is not his 'self'. His 'self' is the Atma which is expected to neutrally observe all that the body does in a complete dispassionate and detached manner. So there is no question of the Atma being accused of doing any fresh or newer deed—for the doer is the body and not the Atma.

The Atma lets the gross body enjoy or suffer from the consequences of the deeds done by the latter while maintaining a safe distance from them. When the body dies, it is either cremated or buried, and with the body is burnt or buried all the deeds that were done by it. Since the body is out of the picture, since it is cremated or buried and gone, there is no question of the consequences of the deeds done by it remaining after its elimination. The indicted body is dead and gone, and the Atma, the 'true self' of the enlightened man which had remained aloof so far from this quagmire of deed and their consequences, is therefore absolved of all the misdoings and the mischief created by the body.

Since Maya is a metaphor for delusions created by a prejudiced and tainted mind-intellect, when true wisdom dawns upon the man it is natural that he would not be misled by Maya. Thus Maya is also dispensed with along with the Praarabdha.]

"verse no. 74 = When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon's curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event and the darkness on the moon's disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments.

Likewise an ignorant man held in shackles by Maya does numerous auspicious rites and rituals and other religious deeds such as doing various sacrifices, sacraments, pilgrimages, purifying rites, offering of oblations and libations to Gods and Spirits etc. in the hope of getting liberation and deliverance from the fetters of Maya. All such activities are futile because the Jiva, the 'true self' or the consciousness that is the true identity of the living being, is never held in shackles or fettered by anything in the first place. Therefore there is no question of the Jiva seeking or getting freedom from any kind of non-existent shackles or fetters; it is all imaginary and fictitious (74).

Swetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 states that—"Prakriti (primary Nature) should be treated as the Maya, and the supreme Lord called Maheshwar (one who is 'Maha'—great, and 'Ishwar'—Lord, of everything) as the maverick Lord who inspires and enables the Maya to not only create this world but also imprint it with its own characteristic qualities (much like the offspring bearing the characters and features, or genes, of the parent).

Thus, the entire creation bears the characteristic qualities and virtues so typical and unique to Maya; these qualities and virtues form an integral character and nature of this creation as a whole as well as of all its individual units" (10).

Here it should be noted that the three inherent qualities or Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama that characterize all the creatures of this creation are like the genes that the offspring carries of its parent. Through these Gunas, the Maya resides in the bosom of all the creatures as their defining 'nature' and basic 'temperament'—called the Prakriti of the creature. Even as the supreme Brahm as the Great Lord called Maheshwar used his mystical deluding maverick powers to create this illusion of the world at the cosmic level and made it so perfect that it appears to be perfectly true, the same Brahm while residing in the bosom of the individual creature as its Atma also creates this world by using its delusion creating powers, and uses its man-Friday, the mind, to ensure that it is implemented to perfection.

The *Sarwasaaro-panishad*, verse no. 15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of Maya in these terms—

"Verse no. 15 = The subtle, esoteric and mysterious but most astounding and potential cosmic powers wielded by this Brahm and the matching dynamic energy that it possesses, is called 'Maya[1]'. This Maya is infinite, having no beginning and no end. [This is because it is a characteristic part of Nature and a manifestation of Brahm's supernatural powers. Since Brahm is infinite, Maya is also infinite.] It makes its appearance when the time comes for the decay and destruction of anything in this world because it has a magnetic pull that spares none and pulls everything along with it towards their end. [Anything overshadowed by ignorance and delusions for which Maya is used as a metaphor, is sure to get to ruin, sooner or later.] It is neither true nor false. [It is like a mirage, or an illusionary scene created on stage by an expert magician. It is so fabulous and make-belief that no one can accept that it is not true, and since it is actually seen on stage it therefore cannot be false either.] It casts a veil of various faults around the creature, creating numerous flaws in the latter's character and nature, but it itself appears to be faultless and flawless. [Maya acts much like magic that creates so many extraordinary scenes but remains indifferent to them because magic is simply an art or science employed by the expert magician to implement the tricks that he has conjured up in his mind. The magician knows the trick behind these scenes and is therefore not interested in them. The art and science of magic is equally not concerned with what happens to the audience because it is simply acting on the instructions of the magician.] Similarly, Maya creates numerous qualities and characteristics in creation, but it itself has none. [Maya is a manifestation of Brahm's dynamic powers to conceive, create, develop, wind up and destroy this creation. If the principal

Brahm has no specific attributes and defining qualities that can be limiting for it, it is expected that Maya would also not exhibit any such attributes and qualities which are not possessed by its principal and originator, the Brahm. Maya is as indefinable as Brahm.]

This entity known as Maya is very deceitful and cunning in nature. It is lowly and scheming. It represents lack of knowledge, it is an embodiment of ignorance and delusions, and it is falsehood and illusions personified. But the irony is that stupid people with low intellect and wisdom think it to be true and real, as having a real existence and very honest in its approach under all circumstances and in all three dimensions of time (i.e. in the past, the present and the future periods of time). [That is, foolish people think that since the Maya has its origin in Brahm, it would also be like Brahm. But they forget the fact that this Maya was willingly created by Brahm to act as an invisible tool in his hands to help create a situation whereby the creation created by him can go on perpetually moving on and on endlessly till the time Brahm decided to wind up the game. It is just like the art of magic employed by the magician to keep the show up and going till the time comes to wind up. No one in his wildest of imagination can say that the magician and the art of magic are one and the same entity. Similarly, Brahm has set up this cosmic show by employing Maya as a powerful tool.]

In other words therefore, 'Maya' is such a concept that is beyond definition and impossible to precisely comprehend much like its principal, the supreme transcendental Brahm. It is impracticable to construct any confirmed view about it and its nature. It is certainly most intractable and enigmatic entity related to this creation (15)."

Why Maya created this world and its effect on it has been beautifully described in *Paingalo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 12. To quote this verse—

"That all-knowing and omniscient Ishwar (the supreme Lord of creation) invoked his own stupendous powers that created illusions and delusions in this creation, called his 'Maya', which allowed him to assume any form that he wished, and in conjunction with it (or joining hands with his own Maya, or allowing himself to become veiled in his own delusions) he entered the body of the individual creature. He was so enamoured with his own creation, and especially when he allowed his Maya to accompany him, that the same cosmic Lord who is beyond comprehension of even the wisest of men and the reach of the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, became engulfed or surrounded by 'Moha' (worldly attractions, infatuations, attachments, endearments, longings, love and affections). With this twin fault—viz. Maya and Moha—that supreme Lord who has no attributes and names became a 'worldly creature'. [That is, when Maya found out that it's Lord is getting interested in and developing affection for what he has created, it went ahead to fulfill the wishes of its Lord like a faithful and obedient servant would. Maya went literally overboard to please the Lord, and knowing that he might balk and suffer indecision (because Brahm was an enlightened Being, and he would soon realise his failings), Maya showed its sly hand and made him get infatuated and enamoured with that creation to such an extent that the Lord lost awareness of who is was, and consequently became engrossed in this world like a fish takes to water at the first opportunity. Say, if this can

happen to the Ishwar whose Maya did not think twice in casting its evil spell upon its own Lord, how can an ordinary creature can ever expect to be free form its tentacles!]

Therefore, the supreme Ishwar, now as a creature, began to treat himself as a doer of deeds and an enjoyer of or a sufferer from the consequences of those deeds because he became associated with the three types of bodies in the form of a worldly creature.

When he got associated with the body having three divisions (gross, subtle and causal), he naturally lived through all the states through which these bodies pass during their sojourn in this mortal world—such as the waking state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state, and the Turiya state of existence. Further, since he had assumed all the characteristics of a creature's body, he assumed that he would die like an ordinary creature. Thus, the immortal Lord became mortal! [In other words, once the Maya and Moha had their upper hands, the Lord of creation was misled to believe that he is an ordinary mortal being who has a mortal body, undergoes the three states of existence so characteristic of the body, and that he would die and enjoy or suffer the results of his deeds.]

As a result he went round and round like the bullock turning the water-wheel or the potter's wheel which goes on endlessly turning; he got trapped in this wheel of a continuous cycle of birth and death (12)."

The concept and inter-relationship between Maya, Jiva (the living being), Ishwar (the Lord), Prakriti (nature) and Jagat (world) has been beautifully described in the *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 47-49, 52-54, 56-57. It goes on to describe two important powers or Shaktis of Maya, called the 'Vikshep Shakti' and the other called the 'Aavaran Shakti'. To quote—

"Verse no. 47 = The Prakriti (Nature) was created or produced by a combination of the three primary qualifications called Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas. [These are the basic qualities that determine the nature and temperament of all creatures. All living beings have them in varying proportions. The Sata is the best and most auspicious quality that makes a man spiritually inclined. The Raja makes him tend to veer towards the tendency to move towards the world with the intentions to expand and acquire fame and name. The Tama is the meanest of the three qualities which make a man mean and of a low mentality. The personality and character of any man is decided by the ratio of these three basic qualities.]

Just like an image forming in a mirror appears to be very true, life-like and almost identical to the object of which it is a reflection (if one is unaware that what one sees in this mirror is merely an image and not the real thing), the reflection of the consciousness in the mirror of Nature appears to be identical to the original cosmic Consciousness. [The nature of a man is already said to be tainted by the three Gunas as stated above. When the consciousness is seen through this veil, it is obvious that these three Gunas would cast their affect on the real form and nature of the consciousness and it would be tainted by them. So though the primary consciousness is pristine pure, incorrupt and immaculate, its version as seen in living creatures appears to be tainted due to presence of the various Gunas that are invariably present in all

living creatures as their inherent character and nature. See verse no. 48 below.] (47).

"Verse no. 48 = Since the Prakriti (Nature) consists of three Gunas, when the pure consciousness is reflected in it, the result is that the Prakriti appears to depict three versions of the same consciousness, or Prakriti begins to glow or shine with three different hues that correspond to the three basic Gunas (called Sata, Raja and Tama) that this Prakriti has as its integral part. [The Prakriti has no shine of its own but it is the consciousness that is present in a creature that makes it alive and showcase its characters much like the case of a lantern's glass chimney of a particular colour which glows and shows its colour only when the wick of the lantern is lighted inside it. The light of the lantern here is the consciousness, the coloured chimney is the Prakriti of the creature, and the lantern is the creature himself.]

You, i.e. your pure quintessential 'self' as the pure consciousness, become a Jiva (a mortal living being having a gross body and depicting a set of characteristics or attributes) because of being separated or torn away from your quintessential true form known as the Consciousness (which is always immaculate, incorrupt and pure) due to this distorted view of your 'self' when the latter is seen through the prism of the tainted Prakriti. [The pure quintessential 'self' is consciousness personified. It is marked by being eternal, immaculate and taintless. On the other hand the Jiva is mortal, perishable and tainted with numerous shortcomings. This happens because the creature sees the consciousness through the looking glass of his inherent nature which is already tainted by the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama. These three Gunas do not allow anyone to see the consciousness in its true form. To do so, one would have to rise above the mundane and develop proper insight just like a microscope is needed to see things that are too small to be seen by the naked eye.] (48).

"Verse no. 49 = Prakriti (Nature) in which the dominant Guna or quality is pure Sata[1] is called the 'Maya that is predominantly auspicious[2]'.

The pure consciousness that is reflected in this Maya (Prakriti or Nature) which is dominated by the Sata Guna is known as 'Aja' or the creator Brahma[3]. [And this is why Brahma is regarded as being predominantly wise, learned and enlightened about spiritual and metaphysical matters inspite of the fact that he is neck deep in the process of creation, and is enchanted so much by his own creation and its astounding beauty that he remains perpetually enthralled and so completely enamoured by it that he appears, for all practical purposes, to be deeply engrossed in this perishable and finite world inspite of being the creator of the Vedas and their Upanishads that are the epitome of knowledge and wisdom regarding spiritualism.] (49).

[Note—[1]Sata is the first of the three quintessential natural qualities that determine the basis nature, temperament and personality of the creature as an individual as well as the entire creation as a resultant composite affect of the characteristics of all the individual units combined together to present a whole picture. Sata Guna is the quality which is regarded as the best quality present in a creature and it is marked by a predominance of auspiciousness, righteousness, virtuousness and noble qualities. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities

as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. This quality creates an inherent affinity in a creature towards things in life which are of high moral value and uplifting for the soul rather than things which are demoting and denigrating for the spirit.

The Sata Guna or quality is the veil covering the soul like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the Satwic desires; its removal requires the least effort. It is the foremost and the best amongst the three characteristics of a creature such as good and positive virtuous such as righteousness, creativity, noble deeds and thoughts, the positive qualities of service, benevolence, mercy, devotion, wisdom, holiness, piety etc.

[2]Maya broadly means delusions creating powers of the Supreme Being. Maya is the indescribable and inconceivable cosmic dynamic power that the transcendental cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm employs to create delusions. The basic idea here is that Maya is like a transparent coloured sheet which covers the supreme 'truth' in the creation. Since it is transparent, it assumes the attributes of the 'truth' that it covers, because for all practical purposes an ordinary man in unable to see that veil because of its transparency. But at the same time, being tinged by different Gunas, the view of the 'truth' as seen through the veil of Maya gets tainted or distorted proportionately.

There is a simple way of understanding what is called 'illusion and Maya vis-à-vis the Truth and Reality'. Let us take the instance of the lantern with the coloured glass chimney to visualise how this happens. The colour of the flame as well as the light that the lantern gives would obviously be affected by the colour of the glass chimney. At the same time, the chimney has no light of its own but when the wick is lighted the chimney begins to glow. This coloured chimney is like the veil of Maya surrounding the inner light of consciousness; it is the veil that hides the true colour of the consciousness and gives the latter its own hue. Maya has no effect upon the person who wishes to see the consciousness sans its interference just like the case when one can see the actual colour of the flame when he views it after removing the coloured glass chimney. Not only this, the colour of everything upon which this tainted light of the lantern falls would also be affected. In other words, the creature under the overriding influence of Maya begins to see the world with a tainted vision which is far removed from the truth.

Maya hides the truthfulness of the Truth, and instead lends its own attributes and characteristics to that Truth known as the 'Nirgun Brahm' by the Upanishads when the latter is observed through this veil, while at the same time the Maya assumes the glorious attributes of Brahm itself just like the case of the lantern with the coloured glass chimney cited here. So, ignorant fools think that the Maya is the real thing, whereas they are actually seeing the 'veiled truth' as observed through this covering of Maya, because the actual 'truth' is hidden from view by this transparent sheet which has lend it its own colour and hue. As a result, that Nirgun appears to have some attributes, and it thereby becomes 'Sagun', or the one with attributes and characteristics, by the interference of

Maya.

As we have seen in verse no. 47-48 above, the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama are the colours present in the Prakriti that forms a veil that covers the 'truth', and that is why Maya prevents one to see and understand the 'real' nature and form of this 'truth' because of the intervention of these three tainting affects.

Brahma the creator of the visible world is also known as Hiranyagarbha, the cosmic subtle body of the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. This Hiranyagarbha was the first step in the process of evolution of creation because it represented Brahm's auspicious desire to create; it marked the dominance of Sata Guna because the very desire to create as opposed to destroy is a good quality. When the process moved ahead, elements of grossness silently and imperceptibly crept in gradually, and the Hiranyagarbha transformed into Brahma the creator of the visible world. So while Hiranyagarbha is the finer aspect of the subtle body of Brahm, Brahma is the grosser aspect of the same subtle body at the cosmic level of creation. According to another version, Hiranyagarbha metamorphosed into the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from the latter that first Vishnu and then Brahma emerged. When Brahm woke up to the realities of life created by him, he was known as Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. Since Brahma, the creator of the visible world, is the first auspicious step that the Supreme Being (Brahm) took in this process, he is marked by the predominance of Sata Guna. That is also why the Vedas were pronounced by Brahma himself.]

"Verse no. 52 = In this way, the pure cosmic Consciousness possessing all the eclectic and divine virtues and supernatural powers, such as being Sarvagya (omniscient, all-knowing and all-wise) etc. is called 'Ishwar[1]'.

Maya has two Shaktis (dynamic powers or forces) that are employed by this Ishwar (pure consciousness) to implement its will. These are—(a) Vikshep Shakti meaning 'deflection, dissipation, confusion, perplexity, obstruction, disturbance, scattering or tossing about in uncertainty and disarray, agitation of mind and spirit, fickleness, fragmentation, fission and disharmony etc.', and (b) Aavaran Shakti meaning 'to cover in a veil, to sheath, to envelop, to wrap in a sheet, distortions, pretension, deception, deceit and something that does not allow the original thing to be seen by covering it with a thin veil that distorts its originality; a veil of ignorance about one's true nature, identity and essential form that cloaks the Atma/soul which is pure consciousness and the true self' (52).

[Note—[1]Ishwar is honoured by epithets which highlight some or the other of his majestic glories. Some of them, inter alia, are the following—Satya (truth), Shiva (auspicious), Sundar (beauty); Satt (eternal), Chitt (consciousness; knowledge), Anand (beatitude and felicity); Akchar (imperishable; the eternal ethereal word), Uttam (the best, the most exalted, the ultimate), Purush (the primary Male Spirit; the supreme Spirit), Parmatma (the supreme Soul of creation), Prakriti (primary Nature), Purshottam (the best Purush; the most exalted holy spirit), Pragya (knowledgeable, wise, skilled, enlightened and conscious) and Vibho (omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent).]

"Verse no. 53 = The first forceful power of Maya called Vikshep Shakti is responsible for creation of the entire world, right from the gross body of the individual creature at the micro level of creation to the vast universe at the macro level of creation.

The second forceful power of Maya called Aavaran Shakti is responsible creating a distinction between the 'seer' (i.e. the pure conscious 'self' or the Atma) and the 'things or objects that are seen' by this seer at the micro level of creation, and between 'Brahm' (the all-pervading seer or cosmic Consciousness) and 'Srishti' (the manifested creation springing forth from this Brahm and the latter's visible revelation) at the macro level of creation. This Aavaran Shakti covers the truthfulness of 'consciousness' and makes it tainted (53).

[Note—The delusions created by Maya casts a veil around the truth so much so that the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true identity of the creature, is unable to see the 'absolute truth and reality' behind what is seen externally in the physical world. It forgets in its ignorance created by this veil of Maya that actually the external world has derived the importance and worth because of the presence of conscious life in the form of Atma in it, and the exterior façade is merely a covering that sheaths this Atma. Shorn of the Atma, the world would be as good as a dead body—say, who would like to fall in love with a dead body? A living being is dear one moment till he is alive and useful, and as soon as he is dead, he becomes useless and is disposed of immediately at the other moment. The basic unit that lends life, substance and value to everything in existence is the quintessential factor of universal consciousness that is a non-dual entity. That is, the consciousness in the creature known as the 'seer' and the other creature who is 'seen' is the same. This is the climax of enlightenment, and the absence of it is due to the covering of Aavaran which eclipses or distorts this wisdom and enlightenment. The tainted Aavaran of Maya prevents one to come to know the truth and reality, and it is the cause of all delusions that create a sense of duality and separation between things that are inherently one, immutable and inseparable. This delusion creates an impression of one entity being the 'self' and the second entity being the 'other person'. It is the cause of all strife, all bad blood, disharmony, animosity, jealousy, malice and hatred in this world; it is the prime cause of all dichotomy, confusions, perplexities and doubts.]

"Verse no. 54 = This (Maya) is the root cause of all worldly fetters that shackle a creature to this artificial material world of delusions. Under the influence of Maya, the Sakshi—the true 'self' of the creature, the pure conscious Atma that is supposed to remain a neutral witness to the happenings in the gross physical external world without actually getting involved in it—begins to see and recognise the external world that exists in the front of its eyes with its gross physical properties and outer characteristic features by employing the gross eyes of the body.

That is, the gross features of the external world are seen and believed to be the true and real form of the world under the deluding influence of Maya. In other words, the 'Ling Deha' (gross body) of the creation is perceived as the real world instead of the pure consciousness and the 'truth' that pervades through out in it in a most subtle and hidden form (54).

[Note—Since the world is beheld by the 'self' through the tainted veil of Maya which has already influenced the mind-intellect complex through which external inputs and information are received and interpreted, the creature (i.e. the Sakshi) sees only a distorted version of the world. That is, the creature is able to see only the external features of the gross world outside. This external façade is so life-like and magical that the creature believes it to be true and real. Maya prevents the 'self' from seeing the truth; Maya prevents the creature from realising the fact that this physical gross world is unreal and untruth and simply like a mirage of the desert—un-sustainable, transient, non-attainable, illusionary and deluding. The creature is not able to perceive the concealed 'truth' of life behind this façade, the 'truth' called the Atma or consciousness representing the cosmic Absolute without which this external gross body would be of no good. This is the magical theatrical performance of the maverick Maya that it produces a scenario that is so life-like and charming that a deluded creature who was supposed to remain a 'Sakshi' or a neutral witness to the external world is swept off his feet and gets neck-deeply involved in it.

Under the tainting influence of Maya, the creature is not able to see the hidden 'real and absolute Truth' and instead begins to believe in the 'apparent truth' which is more like the water of a mirage than the water of a river or lake.

In other words, the 'Sakshi', i.e. the true 'self' of the creature—who is supposed to be neutral and just mutely watch the magical creation of Maya unfold in the form of this physical world which is unreal, transient and perishable without actually getting involved in it (much like a spectator watching a magic show—forgets this basic principle and is so charmed by the scene watched that he gets swept off his feet and plunges head on into this world and its activities.

The net result of the influence of Maya is that the Sakshi gets neck-deep involved in something with which it should not have been involved at all—i.e. the 'self' of the creature should have remained neutral towards the material objects of the world and getting involved in them, should have seen the underlying 'truth' in the world and not be swept off by its external charms, but unfortunately this does not happen. Under the delusory effects of Maya, this Sakshi believes that what he sees in the outside world of sense objects is the truth and reality, and therefore it is worth pursuing and obtaining. The Sakshi allows himself to be voluntarily trapped like a bird willingly getting caught in a bird-catcher's net.

The fact is that the world is artificial and an imaginary creation of the mind and its sub-conscious (refer Yogshika Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-61, 70), and the Atma—which is eternally wised and enlightened—is supposed to be aware of this fact and treat the artificial world as such. But unfortunately it doesn't. This is because the Atma, which is supposed to be a mere 'Sakshi' (mute, dispassionate, neutral and non-involved witness) gets deluded or misled by the veil of ignorance cast around it by Maya. Treating itself as part of the world, the Sakshi gets involved in the activities of the world. Having exceeded its brief, the Sakshi is bound to suffer from its excesses and get tied in shackles represented by various misconceptions about the reality and truth. The Sakshi remains involved in doing deeds and hopes that

he would get peace and comfort from this world. This world is like a whirlpool in an ocean, it sucks the Sakshi deeper in its vortex and it remains ever trapped in the cycle of birth and death, bobbing up and down in this vast endless ocean represented by this world. After a very long time and many births, the Sakshi realises its follies and decides that enough is enough; it now endeavours to find out a way that would finally ensure that liberation and deliverance is obtained by it at any cost, and that it would not do anything which would force it into being subjugated by Maya and recycled into the bin of birth and death once again. It then researches on the method to achieve this end, and studies the scriptures and consults wise men. It discovers that the basic cause of the entire edifice getting erected is Maya and its delusory effects. It also realises that the 'self' does nothing, and that everything is done by the 'non-self', i.e. the gross body. So, it abhors Maya and delusions created by it, deciding not to get involved in the world. Consequently, when the past baggage of deeds and their consequences are exhausted and newer ones do not accumulate, the Sakshi finally gets its treasured liberation and deliverance.]

"Verse no. 56-57 = When the covering veil of Maya is removed, the creature is clearly able to see the error and the difference between what is the 'actual truth' and the 'apparent truth'. Then the consciousness stops to have any kind of attractions for the gross material world with which it was so enamoured till now. [In the instance of the lantern cited in note of verse no. 49 above, when the tinted glass of the chimney is removed and replaced with transparent colourless glass, one can see the real colour of the flame along with the true colour of the objects that are seen with its light.]

Hence, the notion of the existence of a 'Jiva' (living being) who is separate from the 'true self' or the 'conscious Atma' vanishes. In other words, he begins to see the same Brahm everywhere, both inside his own self as the conscious Atma at the micro level of creation as well as the cosmic Consciousness that pervades everywhere in the external world at the macro level of creation. [That is, the enlightened creature henceforth begins to identify his 'self' with the sublime and subtle consciousness that is invisible, instead of with the gross body that is physically seen in this world. Similarly, he sees no difference between any two living beings because the same conscious Atma lives in both of them.]

He also realises the truth of the fact that the primarily immaculate and untainted divine entity known as Brahm had appeared to be dual in the form of the Supreme Being and the Jiva or the Supreme Being and the manifested world. When the veil of delusions and ignorance is removed, the dichotomy between Brahm and this world is eliminated, and uniformity and non-duality between Brahm and the rest of the creation becomes evident. [That is, he realises that the visible world is nothing but the same immutable, indivisible and non-dual Brahm revealed in these myriad and multifarious forms in which this vast and endless creation exists so much so that no two units in it are identical.] (56-57)."

The relatinship between Maya (worldly delusions) and Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) has been succinctly but effectively described by the great saint-poet Gowsami Tulsidas. Here we shall cite two examples from Dohawali and Ram Charit Manas in the

context of Lord Ram who is an incarnate Supreme Being known in the Upanishads as Brahm.

Dohawali verse no. 69 says—"Like a shadow that is long when the sun is not overhead (and is at distance towards the horizon), and gets progressively shortened till the time it is underfoot as the sun moves closer towards the perpendicular till the time it is finally overhead of the observer, the delusions created by Maya are inversely proportionate to one's nearness to or closeness with Lord Ram[1]."

[Note—[1]Closeness or nearness to Lord Ram implies the degree of love, affection and devotion as well as the sincerity of surrender that a person has for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. Lord Ram is an embodiment and a fount of cosmic Consciousness. He is Brahm personified; he is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being. The Upanishads have said that the celestial Sun is a metaphor for Brahm because its light illuminates the world just as the light of Consciousness enlightens the creature about the truth and reality of this creation as well as his own 'self', thereby removing the darkness of his ignorance.

Delusions are like ghosts and phantoms that are seen in darkness. These delusions are compared to the shadow of a man as a figure of speech. Just like the shadow, the darkness created by ignorance and delusions are also dark. The further away a creature is from the source of light, the longer is his shadow—i.e. the further away he is from knowledge of the Truth and Reality the greater is the degree of his delusions.

The closer a man is to the source of light the brighter would he see things around him. Similarly, the closer one is to the cosmic Consciousness, i.e. the more one has come close to realise the Truth of existence as well as of his own 'self' as being the pure conscious and subtle Atma, and not the physical body that is gross, that this Atma is a counterpart of the cosmic Atma known as Parmatma, the more clearly would he see the reality and the truth of this living creation, and consequently the more shorter will be his spiritual ignorance and its attendant delusions.

Tulsidas therefore affirms that the closer one is to Lord Ram—who is Brahm personified—the lesser is the fear that he has from the delusions and untruths that surround the creature from all sides in this artificial world and keep him tied in fetters that prevent his soul from either finding peace and rest in this life or find emancipation and salvation upon death. Just like a servant who serves an able master is free from any worries about his well-being or future safety, one who has surrendered himself to Lord Ram is free from all sorts of tensions and fears pertaining to this spiritual well-being.

Tulsidas asserts that a person who has firm faith and devotion for Lord Ram is untouched by Maya. This has been affirmed in the context of Bharat when it is said that Lord Ram and Sita are enshrined in the heart of Bharat like a deity is enshrined in a temple, and wherever there is the sun there can be no trace of darkness—refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 295.

Maya is afraid of a person who has Bhakti (devotion, love, affection and surrender) for Lord Ram in his heart because the Lord is especially caring for such a person, and Maya is scared of the Lord because Maya itself is a humble maidservant of the Lord—refer Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 15.]

In his epic story of Lord Ram, universally known as the **Ram Charit Manas**, the relationship between Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) and Maya (worldly delusions) have been succinctly summarized as follows—

(a) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116 briefly say as follows—"Lord Ram loves Bhakti (devotion) while Maya (delusions) is merely like an obedient dancer who does the bidding of her Lord to please him. [The dancer would adopt the posture that pleases her master, and would syncronise all her dance moves in accordance with the music being played and song being sung.] Since Lord Ram favours Bhakti, Maya is scared of it. Bhakti is free from any taint or negativity; it is matchless in its purity and effectiveness. Maya is afraid of anyone in whose heart Bhakti resides with full authority—because Maya is simply a maid when it is compared to Bhakti. So Maya cannot play its tricks upon a devotee of the Lord in whose heart Bhakti lives as the reigning mistress."

(b) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 15 says "Kaam, or worldly desires and lust, do not sprout in the mind and heart of followers and devotees of Lord Hari just like it is impossible for grass to grow in a patch of infertile (desert or rocky and barren) land even if it rains there."

Maya Shakti—The stupendous powers of Maya have been called its 'Shakti'. This concept has been described in *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 48 as follows—"The cosmic 'Maya Shakti' (i.e. the great power of the Supreme Being to create delusions and keep the creature engrossed in its deceptions so that the cycle of creation set in motion by the Lord continues to roll on unhindered) is the grosser revelation of the dynamic powers of Brahm by which the latter created this illusion called the world. It is said to be located in the front part of the forehead and is shaped like a lotus[1]. In the middle of this lotus is located the transcendental cosmic energy of Brahm which is subtle in nature and is called the Naad Shakti[2] (48).

[Note—[1]This symbolic lotus refers to the Agya Chakra. The forehead symbolically represents the head-light of Brahm much like we have headlights in a car because the eyes of the man's body are located here. The eyes help the man to see the visible creation of Brahm which the latter has created using his maverick powers to create illusions, the power called Maya Shakti which literally means precisely this—illusion creating strength and powers. This world is the gross physical revelation of Brahm's stupendous powers to create anything desired. Maya Shakti refers to this power of Brahm—to create an illusion which is so perfect and life-like that it appears to be true from all practical view points though it is basically an illusion. This is the great mystery of creation—the world is said to be illusionary on the one hand, and it is pervaded by Brahm who is not an illusion on the other hand. The secret is that the external features of the world as we see is an illusion just like the water seen in the desert mirage, but the underlying principle that creates this illusion in the desert is a scientific truth having a sound reason. Likewise, the world is created by the ability of the mind to imagine, which is actually Brahm's maverick power on display. Brahm is regarded as being synonymous with wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and

knowledge, so the subtle quality of the mind-intellect complex to be analytical, discerning, thinking intelligently, weighing all the pros and cons and then making decisions and arriving at conclusions—these qualities are the subtle revelations of Brahm. But the power of this same mind to imagine and create a astoundingly fascinating world of charming and enticing objects is a revelation of Brahm's Maya Shakti. The man sees this illusions through his eyes situated in the forehead, and this fact is represented here by saying that the 'Maya Shakti is located in the front of the forehead'.

[2]As compared to this Maya Shakti which has taken a gross form of the physical world having attributes and characteristic features, the Naad Shakti is very subtle and has no physical shape or form or attributes. This is because Naad refers to the sound element which does not have any shape or form. It is like the air and sky elements which too have no form or shape. Since sound is a form of invisible energy, it is the first subtle revelation of Brahm at the cosmic level. Scientists call it the 'Big Bang' at the time of creation, while in the sphere of metaphysics it is called 'Naad'—both refer to sound. The concept of Naad and its origin in a point source called the 'Bindu' or dot have been explained extensively elsewhere in this Upanishad as well as in other Upanishads dealing with Naad and Bindu.]

This Maya is so powerful that it misleads even the Gods as stated in Panch Brahm Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 24 which says—"Remaining stunned and under the magical spell cast by the Great God Shambhu's (Shiva's) Maya (delusion creating powers)[1], even the exalted Gods and other learned creatures are unable to have any idea who that Great God is. They are unable to know anything about him or get acquainted with the reality of this Great God who is the universal Guru (moral preceptor, wise and learned teacher and expert spiritual guide) for the entire living world."

Sage Veda Vyas' *Adhyatma Ramayan*, in its Lanka Kanda, canto 14, verse no.28-29 describes the relationship between Maya and Brahm, albeit in the context of Lord Ram. Let's see what it has to say—

Verse no.28— "Oh Sri Ram! It is at your inspiration, using your stupendous Shakti (powers and potentials), at your behest, and as per your wish that Maya creates this whole world infused and injected with all its characteristic features, such as, inter-alia, the quality of having 'Ahankar' (arrogance, ego, pride, haughtiness, vanity, boastfulness etc.) This is why you are blamed (accused) for all this deluding creation[1] (28).

[Note—[1]It is out of ignorance that one says that 'you', i.e. Lord Ram in his primary form as the supreme transcendental Brahm or Lord Vishnu, are the creator of this myriad world with all its faults and blemishes, evils and vices, entrapments and delusions, shortcomings and drawbacks, whereas in actual fact it is your Maya which has done it. Maya had simply employed your great powers to create, which you had delegated to her in order to enable it to carry out your general mandate to create, but once it got going, it lend its own flavor to it just like a master gives a brief to his servant or cook to prepare a meal and then the cook uses that excuse to create a wide variety of dishes the details of which had been decided by

the cook himself and the master had no say in it, except the general instruction of cooking a meal. If suppose the cook has used a lot of spices and condiments, then one cannot accuse the master of spoiling the meal; it is the cook who is responsible for it. But once the meal is ready, there is nothing that can be done except to throw it away. In the larger picture of things, the Brahm had ordered the Maya, his maid, to prepare this painting known as the world, and then Maya used this sanction by the supreme Lord to do her own bit in order to please him and, in the process, outsmarted him by creating a creation that even Brahm was wonderstruck to behold. Since Maya had his express orders, Brahm could not even blame her for what she had done, because the details were left to her and she did what she was good at.

Again, even as each original thing has an indelible mark, a special quality that reflects the character and skills of the creator, the world created by Maya also had its share of characters and qualities that are reflective of the hand that created it—and that hand was that of the Lord's maid called Maya. So logically therefore, the Lord cannot be accused of so many faults that are associated with the world that Maya created. In fact, the word 'Maya' itself means something that is illusive, deceptive and false.

It is like a world of magic created by the magician, and if one, out of one's ignorance and foolishness thinks that this world is real and allows himself to be deluded by its charms, then the magician cannot be blamed because, to begin with, one is already aware that what he sees is a magical show, and even if he is unaware of it, there are other wise ones who tell him that it is so. If one still falls into the trap, then say how the magician can be blamed for the consequences of such ignorance and foolishness? In our example, Brahm is the magician, and the illusionary world is the magical powers that he possesses which are on display. The wise ones are the sages and seers who elucidate upon the scriptures and tell the creature to be wary, but if the creature does not pay heed, say what has the magician and the sage can do about is, except to wind up the game. This is exactly what Brahm does at the end of one cycle of creation when the fairies springing out of the Pandora's Box just go out of hand to create the Frankenstein Monster.]

Verse no.29—Even as inanimate things like iron become mobile and active under the attractive or repulsive influences/forces of a live magnet, so do Maya creates this whole universe/creation when you glance at it, though it is inert in itself[1] The driving force here is the invisible power of the magnet which infuses the iron with the power to move. The force which activates the Maya is you and you alone (29).

[Note—[1]Here, the Lord is likened to a magnet, and the Maya is likened to the magnetic force that makes the piece of lifeless iron, which stands for the gross and lifeless world, to move and show signs of life. Since Maya cannot be seen even as the magnetic forces of a magnet cannot be visibly seen or perceived except being understood by logic and knowledge of physics and magnetism, one accuses the Lord of creating this world with its myriad characteristics. Even as the iron piece would show signs of movement inspite of the magnet not desiring at all that it does so, the very proximity of the two automatically creates such a situation. Only wise ones realise that the iron is inane and it is the magnet that is responsible for its life, and whatever signs of life that the iron shows is illusive for as soon as the magnet is removed, the iron would not move inspite of it now wanting to do now.

The concept of *Maya affecting the Atma* has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, especially *Maitrayanyu Upanishad*, cantos 2-4 of the Sam Veda tradition.

The example of the water molecule H_2O can be cited to explain the relationship between Maya and Brahm, and how the former distorts one's perception of the facts about the latter.

Water molecules exist in a number of forms—viz. clouds, rain, water vapour/steam, moisture, mist, foam, liquid pure water which we drink, water in the form of numerous water-bodies such as an ocean, a river, stream, well, pond, lake, puddle, pool etc., ice, snow, and water in the form of the basic ingredient of all things that have their existence in a fluid form. A lay person calls this 'water' with so many names; he sees a difference between all of them, but for a wise man who knows the chemistry of the water element all these existential forms of water are nothing but two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen combined in a fixed configuration which cannot be tempered with if the water has to retain its characteristic basic features, virtues and qualities.

The molecule of water acquires various forms depending on the circumstances in which it has to exist, but none of them would affect the basic nature and facts about water.

Similarly, Brahm, which is one indivisible immutable and unfractionable entity, assumes, or appears to exist in myriad forms, having mind-boggling permutations and combinations of shapes, sizes, colours and contours, depending upon the prevailing circumstances and requirements of existence. The same entity when viewed with different glasses appears to have different colours—as is evident when we observe anything with sunglasses of different colours. It acquires different meanings when viewed from different perspective—as is evident when the same event is interpreted differently by people having different views, different intelligence, different cultures, and different mental bearings. The same things changes in size and colour when observed from different distances—as is very clear when we observe a thing from very close quarters and then view it from a great distance; even the same mountain appears to be blue, green, dark and of other colours when seen at different times of the day and varying distances and through changing atmospheric conditions.

So it would be erroneous to say with certainty that what one has observed is the actual truth, for it might be very misleading and at odds to what others have observed. When, say, five people describe a mountain or scenery, each would narrate what he has observed. All of them are correct, but there is much more to that mountain or scenery than what one gathers from these narrations. Herein lye the importance of 'self-realisation', because we may doubt what others say, but we cannot be more convinced when we observe anything first hand for ourselves.

Brahm is like this water molecule; it has revealed itself in the form of this multifarious creation, each unit of the latter is Brahm manifested, but Brahm is not limited to that specific definition. All forms that the molecules of water take are nothing else but 'water', undiluted and uncorrupted. Whether we call it moisture, cloud, rain, steam, ice, river or ocean, none of these should deter a wise man from observing 'water', or better still 'two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen' in all these forms. A learned man would be amused when people fight

over these definitions, and he would call them ignorant ones.

So when we observe Brahm with a holistic and all-inclusive view, we find that the entire creation is 'Brahm manifested'; all the different nomenclatures and definitions pertain to the same entity and therefore all of them are correct. But none of these individual manifestations define Brahm in its entirety, and nor do they become Brahm.

This is Maya, which literally means something which does exist but it is an illusion, a deception and misleading. Water appears in so many forms because of this Maya, and so does Brahm vis-à-vis the world.

Now, there must be something that not only binds two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen together but also injects it with certain qualities that give the resultant product its uniqueness known as water. And this 'uniqueness of water' is not a small matter to be overlooked, because water is the harbinger of life, it is the sustainer of life, and it is the concluder of life. How? Well, it is the first ingredient necessary for initiation of the process of creation; once life starts it sustains it and nourishes it; and the havoc it causes during severe floods, typhoons, tsunamis, cyclonic deluges and oceanic storms when it completely obliterates all traces of life are examples of destruction water can cause. Quite similarly, in different perspectives, Brahm creates, sustains and concludes this creation.

Taken independently, hydrogen and oxygen would not produce water, and neither does their simultaneous existence in a single place automatically means that water would be there, for had it been so then there would be no question of droughts anywhere because both these gases are present everywhere on earth. Therefore, there must be some supernatural force that helps these apparently innocuous looking atoms of these two gases to acquire a special quality known as water. This is called 'Shakti'. What does this Shakti do? It transforms the latent powers and potentials of hydrogen and oxygen into an entity called water that harbours life, sustains and nourishes it, and that even concludes its own creation, none of which functions would these two gases have done left to themselves. But does this Shakti come from outside? No, it is hidden in the atoms of hydrogen and oxygen, and it simply comes to the fore, does its job and collapses in to oblivion, leaving the rest of the process to take care of its self by being controlled or influenced by other forces of Nature.

This allegory or analogy helps to explain how Brahm uses Shakti to create this world, and how the resultant product creates an illusion called Maya about the essential truth. Brahm uses its creative energy, called its Shakti, to create this world, both the visible as well as the invisible. Brahm then resides in this creation as its integral and inseparable part even as hydrogen and oxygen are integral to and inseparable from all forms in which water exists. The ignorance about 'who or what' is the basic truth of this existence, or is the essence in this existence, or is the fundamental principle behind what is seen or experienced or witnessed, is called Maya.

Maya also has its importance in this context of existence, because if Maya or illusion does not exist then this world would also cease to exist as we know it. If the world ceases to exist as we know it, then there would be no question of any interaction or any kind of interdependence and relationship between any given two entities because there would be no

distinction between them, and they would be all alike. Taking the example of water, if we do not distinguish between an ocean or river, or say between the water of a gutter and a well, telling ourselves that the essence of all these fluids is two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, then it would be the height of stupidity for us and create a hilarious situation. So for the purpose of existence these differences have their own importance, but when we wish to learn and get educated about them and not remain ignorant fools then we come face to face with the facts. Even then, as long as we live, we cannot treat the water of the gutter and the water of the well alike for drinking purposes. This is Maya—it creates a piquant situation wherein we know that what we see is not the actual truth but we still cannot do anything about it and continue to treat the falsehood as the real thing.

The *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 43 describes how Maya was created by the Supreme Being and how it is kept under tight leash by him. To quote—"The divine entity that is transcendental and immaculate Consciousness and enlightenment personified cannot be affected or influenced by delusions and ignorance called Maya. At the same time, it remains free from the limitations that are inherent to all things that have a form and name that ignorance and delusions create in this world. [This world is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm, both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as at the microcosmic level as the individual creature. Everything that exists has a form, no matter how gross or subtle it might be. Similarly, each form is assigned a particular name by which it is recognised. These are like artificial limitations and parameters imposed on an entity that is innately not limited and bounded. For instance, we have so many names for water, such as ocean, sea, lagoon, lake, pond, well, river, puddle etc., but the element known as 'water' is much beyond these limited descriptions. No one form can describe 'water' in its entirety; at the most each name describes one of the numerous qualities of water. Likewise, Brahm has revealed itself as countless creatures with as many forms and names, but none of them define Brahm even by a fraction. At the most, they only depict one of its countless and infinite glories.]

Since everything in existence is created by the supreme Lord known as Ishwar, it follows that this Maya is also a creation of Ishwar. But being the Lord of Maya, the Ishwar keeps the latter under leash and subservient to him. Though this is true but still Maya would not desist from showing its maverick tricks as proved by the fact that the inherently detached and untainted Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being which has no attributes and names, comes to be known as an 'Ishwar' when associated by Maya. [Technically, the word Ishwar refers to the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation when considered at the macrocosmic level. The very fact of 'having a body, causal or otherwise' shows that Maya has influenced Brahm. The fact that this Brahm in association with Maya created the rest of the creation is clearly reflected in the word 'causal body' of Brahm known as Ishwar—i.e. the body which is the 'cause' of the rest of the things.]

Extending this logic further, when the originally enlightened Brahm allowed itself to be accompanied by Maya, the latter cast its dark shadow of ignorance on the former and this

resulted in what is known as 'Agyan' to come into existence. Being under the influence of this Agyan—ignorance of its truthful divine nature and supreme stature—Brahm became a Jiva, i.e. it became an ordinary living being who is oblivious of his exalted lineage, and who remains engrossed in an endless cycle of delusions and ignorance (43)."

Triangular relationship between Brahm, Jiva (the creature) and Maya **:-**

The 'Ram Yantra' described in Rampurva Tapiniyopanishad has an interesting verse which describes the position of Sri Ram (Brahm), Sita (Maya) and Laxman (creature or Jiva) in its Canto 4, verse 8-10. I have endeavored here to use it as an allegory and extend its meaning to interpret the metaphysical triangular relationship between these three entities—Brahm (the Supreme Being), Maya (delusions) and Jiva (creature) in a broader perspective. I have also appended at the end of this appendix sketches to illustrate my explanation based on this triumvirate of Ram, Sita and Laxman.

To start with, there was the Brahm in the beginning. When he decided to create the cosmos, he first produced his Maya (represented by Sita). Laxman is representative of the Jiva (creature) which forms the 3rd entity. As described in these verses, the 3 form a triangle A B C. The apex A of the triangle is Brahm, B is Sita and C is Laxman. This triangle explains the whole gamut of the metaphysical relationship between the three. Let us examine it and explore it.

In the beginning was a 'dot' — with no attributes (the point A of the triangle; Brahm). Then it 'extended' itself by a line or tentacle or spider's thread to create the Maya (the point B of the triangle; Sita). Now a single line can be drawn to infinity, and when retracted, it falls back onto itself and withdraws into the original 'dot'. That explains why we define Maya as an extension of Brahm as well as being vast and infinite.

Now, when a Jiva (creature) is created, a triangle is formed (point C of the triangle; Laxman). A triangle is the simplest 'enclosure' bounded by lines representing the three bodies of the Atma that enclose it, viz.—the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. The creature gets entrapped or encaged in it. He gets separated from Brahm by the line A C of the triangle. Besides this, a triangle has a definite boundary, it is demarcated on all the three sides; it is not infinite as a single line is, even as the microcosmic world of the individual is not infinite as the macrocosmic Nature.

The creature (point C of the triangle) is linked both to the Brahm (A) by the line A C as well as to the Maya (B) by line B C. It is trapped in the triangle A B C. In order to reach Brahm, the following options are available to this creature—

(i) It has to break its link with Maya (line B C) by diligent and industrious efforts. If it succeeds in doing so, the triangle vanishes and the creature is said to be 'liberated' from its cage. It is now directly linked to Brahm by the line A C.

(ii) Brahm wishes to help the creature to overcome the influences of Maya. In this case, Maya is slowly retracted by Brahm so that eventually point B coalesces with point A and line A B vanishes. The creature is once again directly linked to Brahm by line A C (because line C B has merged with line C A). The triangular enclosure also vanishes,

thereby setting the creature free.

But 'freedom' entails not necessarily being one with the Brahm because line A C still exists, though there is no tug and pull from Maya (point B) on the creature (point C) as it was earlier. There is no drag on it, there is no compulsion of having to have a triangular relationship which binds the creature to the worldly trap and prevent its merger with Brahm. Now, after freedom, true salvation comes when point A and C merged, not before that.

(iii) In situations where the creature finds it too difficult to cut off the link with Maya completely (i.e. to break the line B C), it can still achieve freedom by diligently progressing towards Brahm (point A) by shortening line A C by various means prescribed by sages and scriptures (i.e. meditation, contemplation, devotion, worship, recitation of the holy name, gaining knowledge or Gyan, pilgrimage, charity etc.) while still maintaining his relationship with the world of Maya (by line B C to point B). A stage will come when point C will gradually shorten the distance between it and point A while point B still exists. This situation is what the erudite 'Raj Rishis' (or sagacious, enlightened and wise sage-like kings) used to achieve while still carrying on their worldly duties— they had their kingly pomp and circumstance but were internally submerged in the thought of the Brahm. A shining example in Ramayan is king Janak, the father of Sita.

(iv) When Brahm is especially very gracious on his devotee and finds that the latter is sincerely interested in coming close to him but slips every time, than he himself initiated steps to— (a) pull the creature towards himself symbolised by shortening of line A C. (b) and pulling the Maya towards himself by shortening of line A B. In this case, the point A B and C all coalesce into a single dot— i.e. Brahm, Maya and creature become one entity. This is called 'Kaivalya-mukti'.

(v) The Kaivalya-mukti can also be obtained by the creature himself by his own efforts— it can shorten the distance between Maya (B) and Brahm (A) by the use of Gyan (knowledge of the fact that Maya is nothing else but an illusionary extension of the ultimate truth which is nothing else but Brahm) and, at the same time, reducing the length of line A C (between himself and Brahm) by contemplation and meditation. The result would be the same as in option (iv) — i.e. merger of points A, B and C.

The natural corollary to this 'triangular theory' is the 'quadrangle, hexagonal and circle' theory. The enclosure formed by the relationship between Brahm, Maya and Jiva can have any number of surfaces—4, 5, 6 etc. The shape will change but they will remain 'enclosures or cages' nevertheless trapping the creature. The only difference between a triangular and, say, hexagonal relationship is that the former is a simple relationship while the complexity increases with each interactive line or each interaction with the world. The circle, however, is more specific, forthwith and blunt in its depiction of this 'enclosure theory of the creature'— here, the centre of the circle is the Brahm while the circumference is the Maya. The creature is prevented by this Maya from having access to the Brahm. The creature goes round and round the Maya but never accesses the Brahm. The theory emphasises the unequivocal necessity to break the circle of Maya in order to access the

Brahm. Maya here stands for all the delusion and ignorance that separate the creature from Brahm.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, verse no. 2-3 describes Maya and says that it is the creator, the sustainer and the concluder of creation. To quote—

"Verse no. 2 = Prajapati Brahma replied to the Gods—'The ancient and most powerful Shakti or dynamic energy of Lord Nrisingh is called Maya (the power to create delusions), and it is with this Shakti that the visible world was created. [Therefore it follows that the world itself is a delusion like the illusionary world created by the magician using his magical powers. The concept of Maya has been elaborately explained in a separate appendix dealing with various Vedantic concepts at the end of this volume.]

It is this Maya Shakti that not only creates this world but also sustains it and becomes the cause of its conclusion. This is why this Maya is the inherent Shakti (dynamism; energy; active ingredient) of Lord Nrisingh's Mantra. Once an aspirant becomes aware and well acquainted with all the aspects of this Maya, he becomes free from all sins[1], he obtains victory over death[2], and he accesses the eternal fount of blissfulness and blessedness called Amrit[3].

Such a lucky man is able to cross over this ocean-like world and obtains all sorts of blessedness and spiritual prosperity (happiness, contentedness, peace, tranquility, blissfulness, beatitude and felicity) that one can hope for (2).

[Note—[1]He overcomes sins because he would have realised that all the misdeeds he does to satisfy his desires and gratify himself by pursuing this material world of sense objects is like running after a mirage in the desert seeking water. This chase would hasten death because there is no water in the mirage. So, when a man becomes enlightened about the falsehood of the charms of this world, and the falsehood of the world itself, he would not do anything unrighteous and wrong just to satisfy himself at the cost of getting trapped in a vicious cycle of sufferings that would inevitably come in its wake. No one wants to suffer. He would also have realised the actual 'truth' in this creation and about his own self—that is, he would have become self-realised and enlightened. This development would pre-empt all inclinations of getting involved in sins and misdemeanours.

[2]He defeats death in the sense that he has nothing to fear from what would be his destiny when he leaves this mortal body because he is rest assured of his emancipation and salvation. Fear of death arises from fact that a man has to suffer from torments as a punishment for his recklessness and misdeeds in life. For instance, if a man does not take proper care of his health he would fall ill and suffer its consequences. Binge eating or eating wrongly just to satisfy the taste buds makes a man conscious of the ill fate that awaits him, and this creates fears. So a sinful man is afraid of death and his destiny, the fate of where he would go after death. But a righteous man has no such fears. Further, a devotee of the Lord has taken the refuge of the supreme Lord and put himself in his custody, therefore he is sure of salvation. Being blessed by the Lord, he would have become sufficiently enlightened to realise that it is the body which dies and not the Atma

which is his truthful 'self' and is pure consciousness that is an eternal and imperishable entity.

[3]It is obvious that with all these developments the spiritual aspirant would have found the eternal fount of peace and tranquility. This gives him access to the nectar of life called Amrit.]

"Verse no. 3 = Wise men wonder whether this Maya Shakti of the Lord is 'Hriswa/Hrasva', 'Dirgha' or 'Plut'. [These three words refer to the three aspects of creation. The word 'Hriswa/Hrasva' refers the smallest step, the initial phase of anything, the beginning; the word 'Dirgha' refers to the most evolved, highly developed and widespread form of the same thing; and the word 'Plut' symbolises the basic or elementary form or the rudimentary form that remains at the end of conclusion and from which a fresh beginning is made.]

When the wise aspirant worships the Lord holistically and uses his divine Mantra for the purpose of meditation and contemplation, he is able to benefit from all these three aspects of the Maya Shakti. That is, the Hriswa/Hrasva aspect of the Lord's Maya Shakti helps to destroy all his sins and their consequences. As a result the aspirant obtains Amrit, the elixir of eternity and blessedness that gives infinite bliss and happiness. The Dirgha aspect of the Maya Shakti bestows upon him immense fame, good name, magnificence, grandeur, majesty, authority, prosperity and well being. He obtains Amrit which gives him all that he desires. And finally, the Plut aspect of Maya Shakti blesses him with wisdom and erudition which also makes Amrit accessible for him.

[Note—From the perspective of creation, the word 'Hriswa/Hrasva' refers to the small beginning of creation in the form of primary forms of life such as algae and fungi. The word 'Dirgha' refers to the most evolved, highly developed and widespread form such as the higher species of animals and the highest rung occupied by the humans. And the word 'Plut' symbolises the rudimentary forms left after the creation comes to an end, or the conclusion of the creation itself.

In the present context the word 'Hriswa/Hrasva' would mean making a small beginning by abstaining from sinful deeds and thoughts. The word 'Dirgha' would mean reaching the higher stage of auspiciousness and righteousness when one becomes perfect and immaculate. Obviously such a man acquires immense good name, powers and authority. And the word 'Plut' would refer to the ultimate state of enlightenment and self-realisation when nothing more is sought and needed.]"

The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition describes Maya in its verse nos. 24 and 31. Let us examine these verses and see what they say—

"verse no. 24 = The Lord's Maya (i.e. his delusion creating tricks and highly mystical powers) is so confounding and mysterious that no one can be certain about him or about anything related to him so much so that even I, Brahma the creator, and Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, are mystified and most confounded and perplexed. It's very difficult to get out of the snare cast by this Maya. [Briefly, Maya is the delusion creating power of Brahm, the Supreme Being. It was Maya that was used by Brahm to weave this fabric of creation just like a magician conjures up a magnificent scene on stage out of thin air. The concept of Maya has been described in significant detail in a separate appendix of this volume under the title

'Vedantic concepts explained'.]

But this Maya can be easily got over with by remembering or meditating upon the holy lotus-like feet of the Lord. [In other words, if one takes the shelter of the Lord and surrenders himself to the Lord's holy feet, then the deluding effects of Maya do not touch such a devotee, Maya cannot cast its magical charm on him or in any way affect him because of the Lord's grace. Maya is regarded as a maid servant of the Lord, and when the Lord is pleased by someone it is natural that the maid servant would keep her hands off from such a person. Refer Ramcharit Manas of Goswami Tuslsidas, Uttar Kand, Doha 71, Kha; and Doha 72, Chaupai line no. 1.] (24).

"verse no. 31 = Even the exalted Gods get trapped and deluded by the immense powers of the Lord's maverick Maya which cause such delusions as Mamta (having love and endearment for anything in this world inspite of being aware of its grossness, perishability, impermanence and falsehood) etc.—say, who can ever describe even a part of the immense magnitude and great reach of the Lord's enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious power known as Maya (31)."

Maha Maya--The concept of the *Maha-Maya* or the great delusion can be understood with a simple illustration. The air element is the same within the earth's atmosphere, but the density of air near the earth's surface is obviously more than the highest point of the atmosphere. Even the level of the various gases and other ingredients of air vary at different levels. Hence, as we move up from the surface, the ingredients of the air and the space in which it lives change, their density and properties change, but primarily they will always remain the air and the sky elements, retaining their intrinsic virtues. Likewise, the same Supreme Being known as Brahm exists throughout this creation in all its different levels, and this Brahm exhibits different sets of characteristics at each level. It is only the degree of grossness and subtlety that changes, and not the primary nature of Brahm. The fact that Brahm appears to change and exhibit different characteristics other than its original attributes at different planes of creation or existence is called 'Maha Maya'—or, the great delusion.

The *Sita Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 5 says that Sita, who is a personified form of the cosmic Shakti of Brahm, is a manifestation of the Maha Maya.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan* Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, paragraph no. 16 cites a fine illustration to illustrate how Maya and its accompanying Avidya affects Brahm. To quote--"Even as the colourless crystal appears to be tinged red when it is near a red-coloured flower of China rose (clom eviseora), and regains its original pristine colour when the flower is removed, the pristine and immaculate prime nature of Brahm appears to be tainted and influenced when there are Maya and Avidya near this Divinity. When this happens, Brahm appears to exhibit various attributes and qualifications; it appears as having a dual form or existence, and other such delusory effects that are natural affects of Maya and Avidya.

When all such attributes and qualifications are eliminated, what remains is the pristine form of Brahm that has no attributes, qualities or characteristics; this Brahm has no forms and

shapes."

Maha Yog Maya—The phrase Maha Yog Maya combines the meaning of Maya and Yoga. Maya means delusions, and Yoga means to bring about a union between any two entities. Hence, the great delusion which is so powerful that it brings together two impossibilities together and makes them appear to be real is called Maha Yog Maya. For instance, this world is not the 'absolute truth' because anything that is 'true' would remain constant and unchanging. Since the world is changing every moment, it cannot be the absolute truth. Therefore it is false. Truth and False are opposite things just like fire and water; they cannot co-exist. If one thing is true, it cannot be false, and vice versa. But Maha Maya is so powerful that the creature is certain that this world with all its sense objects and charms is true and real. He sees others dying but thinks that he would live forever. Since bringing together of two things is called 'Yoga', this bringing together of two impossible things together to make them appear to be true and possible, or making the truth appear as false on the one hand while making false appear to be true on the other hand, is called 'Maha Yog Maya'.

The *Sita Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 3 says that Sita, who is a personified form of the cosmic Shakti of Brahm, is a manifestation of the Yog Maya.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha-Naryan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 6, paragraph no. 13 describes how a spiritual aspirant sees the Maha Yog Maya in a personifed form as he proceeds on his journey towards his final Mukti or Moksha. To quote—"13. Then he reaches the place where he encounters the 'Maha Yog Maya' of Lord Vishnu (i.e. the great delusion-creating powers of the Lord) in a personified form.

[The concept of the Maha-Maya or the great delusion can be understood with a simple illustration. The air element is the same within the earth's atmosphere, but the density of air near the earth's surface is obviously more than the highest point of the atmosphere. Even the level of the various gases and other ingredients of air vary at different levels. Hence, as we move up from the surface of the earth, the ingredients of the air, their density, ratio and properties, change, but primarily they will always remain collectively a part of the air element, inalienable from it, while still retaining their unique virtues which might be different from the air as we understand it to mean. Likewise, the same Supreme Being known as Brahm exists throughout this creation in all its different levels, and this Brahm exhibits different sets of characteristics at each level. It is only the degree of grossness and subtlety that changes, and not the primary nature of Brahm. The fact that Brahm appears to change and exhibit different characteristics other than its original attributes at different planes of creation or existence is called 'Maha Maya'—or, the great delusion.

The phrase Maha Yog Maya combines the meaning of Maya and Yoga. Maya means delusions, and Yoga means to bring about a union between any two entities. Hence, the great delusion which is so powerful that it brings together two impossibilities together and makes them appear to be real is called Maha Yog Maya. For instance, this world is not the 'absolute truth' because anything that is 'true' would remain constant and unchanging. Since the world is changing every moment, it cannot be the absolute truth. Therefore it is false. Truth and False

are opposite things just like fire and water; they cannot co-exist. If one thing is true, it cannot be false, and vice versa. But Maha Maya is so powerful that the creature is certain that this world with all its sense objects and charms is true and real. He sees others dying but thinks that he would live forever. Since bringing together of two things is called 'Yoga', this bringing together of two impossible things together to make them appear to be true and possible, or making the truth appear as false on the one hand while making false appear to be true on the other hand is called 'Maha Yog Maya'.]

This Maha Yog Maya is so powerful that it creates an illusion of dichotomy and opposition in the various forms of the eternal supreme Brahm who is an embodiment of infinite bliss.

[Brahm is indivisible, immutable, non-dual and one. Though Brahm has assumed as many diverse forms as they are independent units in creation, each unique in its self and different from its neighbour, and is given so many that they numbers run into thousands, yet Brahm is one and non-dual. All these varied forms and shapes of Brahm are nothing but like the same colour having many hues and shades. They are like the same letter of the alphabet that is used in countless permutations and combinations to form hundreds and thousands of words. The immense diversity creates doubts in the mind of a thinking person as to the reality of Brahm, whether what is said of Brahm as being non-dual and immutable is true or whether it is false. This creates a lot of confusion, perplexity, restlessness and doubts in the mind of the aspirant about the reality and authenticity of Brahm, thereby robbing his peace of mind and its attendent bliss. A man torn between reality and falsehood can never find rest and happiness; he can never find spiritual bliss and mental peace.]

This Maha Yog Maya is like a veil surrounding the truth of Brahm. The magical world created by it is most fascinating and highly astonishing; it is full of maverick tricks, and is like an ocean of surprises which is full of unexpected events and sights. It is so mysterious that inspite of being illusionary and created out of delusions it still appears to be real and everlasting; it appears to be an image of happiness inspite of its horrifying whirlpools of miseries and pains, of turmoil and turbulence.

[That is, though the world created by Maya is illusionary and therefore all its charms are also illusionary, it appears to be so true and real that the creature falls prey to its charms and allows himself to be trapped by it. The deluded creature thinks it to be permanent and a source of happiness and pleasures. He therefore yearns for its sense objects that provide comfort, pleasure and joys, thinking that by acquiring them he would be so much comfortable, richer and happier. But he forgets that a source that itself is illusionary, that has no existence, can never provide anything that is real and has any truthful value. When he discovers that he has not got what he had expected or yearned for, or that things go on changing every other day and his earlier possessions become outdated the next day, he feels dismayed and distraught. He wants more and still more. This never-ending cycle can obviously not give peace and rest to anyone. It is like a thirsty man running behind the mirage in the desert in search of water which he never finds. Thus, the 'great delusion' that is so powerful and sweeping in its reach, import and effects that it can actually bring about a fusion of the truthful with the falsehood so

as to make what appears as the 'real thing' is known as the Maha Yog Maya.]

The illusion created by this Maha Maya is so effective that the eternal and real Vaikunth (the abode of Lord Vishnu) appears to have a duplicate form as reflected in the great ocean of Avidya (ignorance) created in this illusionary world of Maha Maya.

[It is very important to understand the import of what is being said here. A deluded worshipper thinks that there is a physical Vaikunth high up in the heaven where a physical God known as Vishnu lives. For him, this Vishnu is the almighty Lord of creation. Well, both this Vaikunth and its Lord Vishnu are not the real Vaikunth and Vishnu that the Upanishads talk about as being the true destination of spiritual aspirants who seek emancipation and salvation by finding the Supreme Being known as Brahm. What they perceive as Vaikunth is not the real destination of the soul because of their ignorance of the reality, and what they think is Vishnu is not the real Lord who is the Supreme Being of creation. This is because the 'real' Vishnu who is synonymous with Brahm is eternal and imperishable, but the Vishnu who relates to the fourth Paad of Brahm has a beginning and an end. This is clearly laid out in Canto 3, paragraph no. 10-11. Thus, this Vishnu is not the eternal and immortal Vishnu who is Brahm, the Supreme Being. If this Vishnu is not the real Brahm, then how can his abode called Vaikunth be the real Vaikunth? The real emancipation and salvation is known as 'Kaivalya Mukti' when the individual's Atma, his 'pure consciousness' merges with the supreme Consciousness. This may happen even without leaving the gross body, in which it case is called 'Jivan Mukti', as well as by leaving the body when it is called 'Videha Mukti'. The gross body is made of five elements such as the sky or the subtle spaces that are present between cells and tissues, the air or the vital winds that keep the body alive, the fire or energy that keeps the body activated and energised, the water or the fluid part of the body, and the earth or the grossest part that make up the skin, bones, flesh and nerves and veins etc. When the 'consciousness' leaves the body, the latter automatically disintegrates into its components. This 'consciousness' is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. Hence, the real Vaikunth is inside one's own self, and the real Vishnu is the Supreme Being residing in one's own inner self as the Atma. The body itself is a cosmos in a miniature form. If one has not become 'self-realised', he cannot become Brahm-realised, and therefore all notions of Mukti and Moksha that he might have, or the belief that there is some physical heaven in the sky where some God lives is just as illusionary as the world in which he lives! This is the great message of this paragraph. It is in strict consonant with the doctrines and philosophy expounded in and espoused by the Upanishads.] (13)."

Maya is under the overall control of Ishwar, the Lord of creation—This fact has been emphasized in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 10 as follows—" The Maha Maya—or the dynamic powers of Ishwar (Brahm, the Supreme Being) that create delusions of stupendous proportions—is under the control and supervision of the Lord. The Maha Maya is obedient to its Lord, the Ishwar. [In fact, the Supreme Being is called 'Ishwar' because he is the 'Lord of all', including the Maya.]

The Maha Maya works in accordance to the wishes and desires of the Lord. It resolutely carries out what the Lord determines to do. The Maha Maya is eternally empowered by all the

majestic and mystical powers and undiluted authority so that it can carry out the Lord's wishes endlessly without interruption.

This Maha Maya is the great progenitor of other forms of endless Mayas which together create a web of delusions.

This Maha Maya is regarded as the magical body that Lord Vishnu assumes when the Lord wishes to do so and play around in a sporty manner. [That is why the various magical feats done by different incarnations of Vishnu are regarded as the Lord's Maha Maya doing them. It is the delusory affect of the Maha Maya that the world believes that Vishnu has taken the form of a human etc. and done this and done that. Actually it is the Lord's Maya that does it for him.]

The Maha Maya is so un-imaginably great in its reach and import that even the world's creator known as Brahma (who is so wise that he created the Vedas, the repository of all knowledge and wisdom) cannot understand and fathom it.

Those who worship Lord Vishnu and are devoted to him are able to overcome the affects of Maha Maya and easily cross it. [That is, Maha Maya is not able to cast its delusory net on them.]

On the other hand, those who do not have any devotion for Lord Vishnu cannot overcome this great Maha Maya inspite of their best of efforts (10)."

The 4 forms of Maya—Maya is said to be of three kinds, viz. the one where Sata Guna dominates, called the Satvic Maya, the one where Raja Guna dominates, called the Rajsic Maya, and the one where Tama Guna dominates, called the Tamsic Maya. Beyond these three is the primary form of Maya, known as the Adi Maya.

The Krisna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 4-5 describes them as follows—" Maya (the dynamic power of the Supreme Being to create delusions) is said to be of three kinds—viz. Satvic, Rajsic and Tamasic depending upon the ratio of the three Gunas that is dominant in any one of its three aspects. Out of these, the Satvic Maya is said to be the foremost and the first one, the Rajsic the second one, and Tamsic the third and the lowest one.

The Satvic Maya is the dominant character of Lord Rudra (Shiva) who is the most ardent and the wisest devotee of the Lord. [This is why Lord Shiva is also known as Mahadeva, the Great God, inspite of his role as being the ruthless and uncompromising concluder of creation. Sata Guna inculcates the great virtues of renunciation and enlightenment in the entity that possesses it, so Shiva is the most dispassionate and enlightened of all the Gods.]

Brahma, the creator, has Rajsic Maya as the dominant character. [Raja Guna is concerned with creation and constant involvement in it. This is the function of Brahma.]

The demons had the Tamasic Maya as the dominant character. [Tama Guna creates the tendency to be evil and sinful, characters unique to the demons.]

Thus, Maya is said to be of three kinds, and since the entire creation is a product of Maya it too has these three characteristics in it.

Besides these three forms there is the Maya which is the primary form of Maya from which these three have evolved. This primary Maya is directly related to Lord Vishnu, hence

called the 'Vaishnavi Maya'. It is sort of the parent of all the other forms of Maya. It is so powerful and strong that no one can ever defeat it; not even Brahma the creator could overcome it. [This is the reason why Brahma, though the creator of the Vedas which are supposed to be a repository of all knowledge in creation, could not comprehend who Narayan or Vishnu was. This fact is amply clear in Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad.] (4-5)."

How Maya creates a separation between Brahm (the Supreme Being) and Jiva (creature; living being) has been outlined in the *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 33 as follows—"The Lord of creation known as Maheshwar, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, is merely a neutral witness to everything without getting involved in any of the things and deeds in this world, without either enjoying anything or suffering from anything.

This Maheshwar is self-illuminated. Any sense of duality or difference or dichotomy that exists between this Lord and the Jiva (the creature) is imaginary and only out of the interfering Maya (delusions about the reality and truth).

When the Maya corrupts the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious), the creature begins to think that such difference does exist, while when this Chitta is freed from the corrupting influences of Maya, these imaginary views vanish (33)."

Maya Jaal—The mysterious net of delusions that keeps the creature trapped in its snare is called Maya Jaal. The word 'Maya' briefly means delusions and ignorance, and 'Jaal' means a net, a web, a snare, a trap, a magical spell'.

The concept of Maya briefly refers to something that is based on delusions and deceit. The magical world created by a magician is a world of Maya. The trap that this charming deception creates for the creature making it believe that what it sees is for real is called the Maya Jaal or the net of delusions which entangle the creature like a bird getting caught in a bird catcher's snare. When one sees a magic show he gets so engrossed in its illusions that for the time being the person forgets that what he thinks is so life-like and real has no substance and pith. He thinks that what he sees is real and true. The same basic concept is applied in metaphysics to explain the concept of delusions vis-à-vis this world. The deluded creature begins to get involved in this magical world, and does so many things as if walking in a dream. But a wise man realises that the truth is above this illusive world and does not allow himself to be misled by any cajoling by the magician; he simply laughs at it and waves away all attempts by the latter to entice him to participate in the show. He just watches the magic show dispassionately and does not get emotionally involved in it. Similarly, a wise man does not allow himself to be involved in this deluding world, and remains a dispassionate observer, not a participant in the activity of the world.

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse no. 33 describes this Maya Jaal as follows—"The Atma has no 'Maya', or delusions, deceit and falsehoods in it, and neither is it affected by it at all. The Atma is not involved in any of the activities of this Maya, and therefore there is no fear in it due to any of the activities of Maya[1].

The Atma does not get involved in doing any deeds or taking any actions, and therefore it is not a 'doer' of any deed. It does not hear anything and therefore it does not have to ponder over or remember anything (33).

The *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 43 describes how Maya was created by the Supreme Being and how it is kept under tight leash by him. To quote—"The divine entity that is transcendental and immaculate Consciousness and enlightenment personified cannot be affected or influenced by delusions and ignorance called Maya. At the same time, it remains free from the limitations that are inherent to all things that have a form and name that ignorance and delusions create in this world. [This world is a manifestation of the cosmic Consciousness called Brahm, both at the macrocosmic level of creation as well as at the microcosmic level as the individual creature. Everything that exists has a form, no matter how gross or subtle it might be. Similarly, each form is assigned a particular name by which it is recognised. These are like artificial limitations and parameters imposed on an entity that is innately not limited and bounded. For instance, we have so many names for water, such as ocean, sea, lagoon, lake, pond, well, river, puddle etc., but the element known as 'water' is much beyond these limited descriptions. No one form can describe 'water' in its entirety; at the most each name describes one of the numerous qualities of water. Likewise, Brahm has revealed itself as countless creatures with as many forms and names, but none of them define Brahm even by a fraction. At the most, they only depict one of its countless and infinite glories.]

Since everything in existence is created by the supreme Lord known as Ishwar, it follows that this Maya is also a creation of Ishwar. But being the Lord of Maya, the Ishwar keeps the latter under leash and subservient to him. Though this is true but still Maya would not desist from showing its maverick tricks as proved by the fact that the inherently detached and untainted Brahm, the supreme transcendental Being which has no attributes and names, comes to be known as an 'Ishwar' when associated by Maya. [Technically, the word Ishwar refers to the sum total of all the causal bodies in creation when considered at the macrocosmic level. The very fact of 'having a body, causal or otherwise' shows that Maya has influenced Brahm. The fact that this Brahm in association with Maya created the rest of the creation is clearly reflected in the word 'causal body' of Brahm known as Ishwar—i.e. the body which is the 'cause' of the rest of the things.]

Extending this logic further, when the originally enlightened Brahm allowed itself to be accompanied by Maya, the latter cast its dark shadow of ignorance on the former and this resulted in what is known as 'Agyan' to come into existence. Being under the influence of this Agyan—ignorance of its truthful divine nature and supreme stature—Brahm became a Jiva, i.e. it became an ordinary living being who is oblivious of his exalted lineage, and who remains engrossed in an endless cycle of delusions and ignorance (43)."

The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition describes Maya in its verse nos. 24 and 31. Let us examine these verses and see what they say—

"verse no. 24 = The Lord's Maya (i.e. his delusion creating tricks and highly mystical powers) is so confounding and mysterious that no one can be certain about him or about anything related to him so much so that even I, Brahma the creator, and Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, are mystified and most confounded and perplexed. It's very difficult to get out of the snare cast by this Maya. [Briefly, Maya is the delusion creating power of Brahm, the Supreme Being. It was Maya that was used by Brahm to weave this fabric of creation just like a magician conjures up a magnificent scene on stage out of thin air. The concept of Maya has been described in significant detail in a separate appendix of this volume under the title 'Vedantic concepts explained'.]

But this Maya can be easily got over with by remembering or meditating upon the holy lotus-like feet of the Lord. [In other words, if one takes the shelter of the Lord and surrenders himself to the Lord's holy feet, then the deluding effects of Maya do not touch such a devotee, Maya cannot cast its magical charm on him or in any way affect him because of the Lord's grace. Maya is regarded as a maid servant of the Lord, and when the Lord is pleased by someone it is natural that the maid servant would keep her hands off from such a person. Refer Ramcharit Manas of Goswami Tuslsidas, Uttar Kand, Doha 71, Kha; and Doha 72, Chaupai line no. 1.] (24).

"verse no. 31 = Even the exalted Gods get trapped and deluded by the immense powers of the Lord's maverick Maya which cause such delusions as Mamta (having love and endearment for anything in this world inspite of being aware of its grossness, perishability, impermanence and falsehood) etc.—say, who can ever describe even a part of the immense magnitude and great reach of the Lord's enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious power known as Maya (31)."

(16) Prakriti (Nature)—The word Prakriti basically means 'nature' with all its connotations. The Chambers dictionary defines it as the power that creates and regulates the world; the power of growth; the established order of things; the cosmos; the external world especially that untouched by man; the inherent qualities in anything that makes it what it is; the essence; the being; the constitution; a kind or order; naturalness; normal feeling; conformity to truth or reality; the inborn mind; the character, instinct or disposition; the vital power; the course of life; the nakedness of truth; the primitive undomesticated condition; the strength or substance of anything; a deity personifying some force of physical nature.

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his encyclopedic Sanskrit-English dictionary describes it thus—'making or placing before or at first'.

The word Prakriti has many connotations, viz. the original or natural or basic form or condition of anything; the original or primary nature, character, condition, constitution, temperament, disposition; the fundamental form or shape or essence or pattern or standard or model, rule; Mother Nature which has the active physical natural forces that are responsible for unfolding the creation, its sustenance and annihilation; something that is inherent, innate, genuine, unaltered, unadulterated, basic, normal, bare, naked, crude, integral and stripped of

all pretensions; the fundamental pattern, form, standard and model upon which the rest of the things are based; the crude or basic or root or seed form of any word, and by extension of anything expressed; that which decides the existential mode of anything; the coefficient, the multiplier of any fundamental element.

As inherent nature and temperament of a creature, it determines the way the world behaves and thinks; it determines the basic character of the creature and the creation as a whole because the individual creature is but a single unit of the creation.

It ought to be noted here that the concept of Prakrit is intricately woven into the fabric of creation and conforms to both the views of Avyakta (un-manifest) and Vyakta (manifest). At the subtle level, Prakriti is Avyakta, while at the gross level it is Vyakta. The word would also therefore have two applications.

The word Prakriti also refers to the 'personified will of the Supreme Being in the creation', and it therefore is synonymous with the powers of the Supreme Being personified as Mother Nature in whose womb the entire creation has revealed itself. It is deified forces of Nature and revealed as different renowned and powerful Goddesses.

The Prakriti represents the cosmic creative will of the creator that has revealed itself as the primary female aspect of creation which is known as 'Shakti', while its male aspect is known as the 'Viraat Purush'. The Shakti is the active ingredient or force that creates and regulates everything, while the primary entity or Being whose will this Shakti is implementing is called Brahm who remains passive.

According to the Purans, this Prakriti or Nature has been personified as different Goddesses, while Brahm has been known as Viraat Purush in the terminology of Vedanta or the Upanishads, and Vishnu in the Purans. The Shakti is the female aspect of Purush, and is considered as inseparable from him; in fact they are two halves of the same Brahm. In order to create, Brahm revealed himself in these two primary forces which revealed themselves as the cosmos or Nature. As the different inherent tendencies of a creature, the forces of creation came to be known as Sattva, Raj and Tam which determines and regulates the continuous cycle of creation, sustenance and conclusion. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakriti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

According to Sankhya Shastra, Prakriti is the original producer of the material world consisting of the three Gunas or fundamental qualities that are inherent in all the creatures and they decide the character and temperament of that creature depending upon the dominance of one quality over the other two. These three Gunas are—(i) 'Sata', or those which are auspicious and righteous and noble, (ii) 'Raja', or worldly qualities marked by such notions as having

passions, desires, greed etc. and (iii) 'Tama', or those qualities that are 'dark' by nature, such as those that are categorised as sinful and pervert, leading to a creature's moral downfall.

The word Prakriti refers to the following—(a) Mother Nature and (b) the natural habits, temperaments and inclinations of a person. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakriti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

The *Niralambo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes Prakriti as follows—"What is Prakriti? That which creates this colourful canvas of creation in association with the supreme transcendental Brahm, that which derives this stupendous ability and magnificent potentials of conjuring up this infinitely vast and most fascinating, this multifarious and endless creation of all possible hues and shades because of its association with Brahm, that which represents, personifies and exhibits the powers of intelligence, wisdom, skills, craftsmanship and expertise that Brahm possesses (as is evident in the fact of it being able to create this world literally from nothing, and injecting it with stupendous magical powers of self propagation and self sustenance leading to eternity and perpetuity that Brahm only possesses)—such an enigmatic and indescribable entity, which is often said to be synonymous with its principal source Brahm, is called Prakriti (6)."

The *Paingalo Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 3 describes *how Prakriti came into being* and how its *three basic characteristics* of Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas represented by *three primary colours* of white, red and dark metamorphosed into the myriad character traits that would mark the creation and its inhabitant creatures when the creation would eventually come into being. Let us see what is has to say on this subject. To quote—

"Canto 1, verse no. 3 = Even as water appears to be present in the mirage seen in a desert, silver appears to be present in the inner shiny surface of the oyster shell, a pillar or a trunk of a tree resembles the male phallus, and crystal appears to have superficial linings, the primary and primordial 'Prakriti', or Nature, having three primary shades of colours such as red (blood-like), white (silver-like) and dark (night-like), was imagined to be present in that 'Sat' (truth). In other words, the Prakriti or Nature was supposed to be an imaginary creation emerging or making its appearance from the primary and eternal 'truth' which was immaculate and untainted. These three colours, present in equal amount and intensity, represented the three Gunas or qualities that formed the fundamental nature and defined the inherent qualities and virtues of this Prakriti. Since initially they were in equal proportions/ratios, the resultant effect was a neutral entity. In other words, this Prakriti was primarily present as an integral part of Truth known as Brahm, but originally it was 'neutral and colourless' like its principal, the

neutral, pure, uncorrupt, taintless, formless and attributeless Brahm, because all these three colours representing the three basic qualities called Gunas were in equal quantity and neutralized each other. [It was later on when they gradually began to combine with each other in different proportions that they segregated themselves into different shades of colours symbolising different characteristic traits, nature and temperaments present in the countless creatures of the creation revealed as a magnificent and charming world of multiplicity and variety.]

What was initially reflected like an image in a mirror at the beginning of creation was this Prakriti having the three Gunas which were initially present in a neutral state in the principal from which Prakriti was born, and which is known as Brahm. That is, Prakriti was primarily an image or reflection of what Brahm was like—it inherently possessed everything that Brahm possessed as represented by the presence of these three primary colours in it, but it nevertheless remained neutral in the beginning. Since any image must have a principal of which it is a reflection, this Prakriti had Brahm as its primary principal. In other words, what was reflected as Prakriti or Nature was indeed Brahm.

This Brahm was consciousness personified and the primary Truth. This is because only the 'truth' can have an image; we do not see any reflection or image of imaginary things in a mirror. Brahm is consciousnesses because anything that is inherently and fundamentally 'alive' can ever hope to exhibit the powers of creation and imagination, as dead entities cannot create and imagine. Therefore, what this Prakriti reflected was primarily pure truth and consciousness known as Brahm (3).

The *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 47-49, describe very succinctly and clearly the concept what Maya (the dynamic powers to creation delusions), Jiva (the individual creature; the living being), Ishwar (the supreme Lord God; the Supreme Being), Prakriti (Nature) and Jagat (the manifested world; creation).

This Upanishad has already been included under the heading Maya in s.no. 15 of this appendix.

(17) The Vital Winds or Prans--

Vayu God and Vital winds or Prans—(a) Vayu God appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/2/1-3; 1/134; 4/46/1; 7/90/1-4; 8/26/20-25; Sam Veda—600; Yajur Veda—7/7; 14/12; Atharva Veda—6/10/2. He is the vital wind forces of Nature personified and exhibits the dynamism and powers that the wind possesses.

(b) The Vital Winds/Pran—Dictionary defines 'Pran' as breath, inhaled and exhaled wind, the breath of life, life itself, one of the five vital winds or airs that sustain life, strength, valour, courage, energy, vitality, vigour. It is also synonymous with the fire element as well as with the supreme soul or Atma. It is the 'fire element' because both the fire as well as the Pran inject and infuse life into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body of a creature, enabling it to get up and perform its functions and carry on with its activities. A dead body from which 'life' has exited becomes cold and lifeless, thereby indicating that the fire element that is inherently present in it has been extinguished—we then declare that the man is dead.

The Pran literally means the life of all living beings, so called because the Pran injects life and consciousness in the otherwise lifeless body of the organism. It is the vital life-consciousness present in the body of an individual creature. It is represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive and distinguishes a living body from a dead one. The word 'Pran' is usually associated with the vital winds of the body as it is these winds that keep the body active and alive. The Pran is sometimes used synonymously with the Atma or soul of the creature because both are equally important for a creature's existence. Whereas Pran is a synonym of life and vitality, Atma stands for the consciousness present in the body. Hence both are like the two sides of the same coin called the living being.

Though technically Atma or soul is pure consciousness while Pran is a vital wind or air element, practically they are synonymous with each other. An illustration will clear this point. Suppose a man has lost senses in his limbs—they have been paralysed, or he is lying unconsciousness due to some serious disease. We regard such a man as alive and not as dead as long as he continues to breath, and as long as he breaths, or as long as he is technically 'alive' his Atma is deemed to be inside his body, because the true identity or the true self of a man is not his physical body but his Atma. Therefore we do not regard the 'unconscious' body as dead. But when he actually dies, that is, when he stops to breathe, we say that 'his Pran' has left the body, and that 'he' has died. Now, who has died? It is the person whose Pran has left the body; and the person is the 'self' or the Atma which has left the body when the Pran made its exit from it at the time of death. This is because Pran and Atma depend on each other so much so that as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the Atma also leaves the body and we say that the person is no more. Why do we say that the 'person is no more' when the body is actually lying in front of us? It is because the 'person' is the Atma and not the body, and this Atma has left the body with the Pran at the time of death. When the proper time comes, the Atma leaves the body astride the Pran, riding piggy back on it.

The five main vital winds are Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan. Amongst them, the Pran refers to the breath which injects the vital spark of life in a body to keep it alive and active, thereby providing it with the necessary impetus, the energy, vitality and strength to perform its designated functions and duties as a living entity. All the other vital winds are of any relevance and significance only as long as there is Pran in the body for the simple reason that if the body stops breathing it would die, and the dead body has neither the need for the other winds nor are they competent enough to keep it alive relying on their own strength. At the same time, all these vital winds are collectively called Pran because they work in tandem with each other to enable the main Pran, the breath, to actually carry out its function. These vital winds do not exist in separate so-called water tight compartments, as this is an incredulous proposition because air is an element that cannot be compartmentalized into separate entities having distinct existences, but they are named as separate winds just for the academic purpose of studying the way the vital wind or air functions differently in the body to enable it to carry on with its functions. So these other 'Prans' or vital winds besides the breath, both inhaled and exhaled, are the following—Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan.

So we see that the term 'Pran' is usually applied to breath because it is the vital wind force that injects and sustains life and vitality in a creature. It is synonymous with life, Atma and soul of a living creature. The presence of Pran determines whether a creature is dead or alive; it is a distinguishing factor between the animate and inanimate world. Pran is the essential vibrations of life; it is the rhythm of life; it is the essential characteristic that defines life.

The inherent tendency of the Pran, which is the vital wind residing in the upper part of the body between the heart-lungs and the nose, is to lift the creature to a higher state of noble, righteous, virtuous, auspicious and spiritual existence, to become wise and enlightened. On the contrary, the Apaan winds lives in the intestine and passes down through the anus. It symbolises the downward drag on the creature's spiritual upliftment, pulling it down towards the grosser aspects of creation and the materialistic world which is not only gross but also filthy and worthless like the excretory matters present in the intestine. It also symbolises passions, evils, vices, perversion and attachments to the worldly things at large, and their accompanying perplexities, bewilderments and hassles leading to restlessness and moral turpitude and degradation. This oscillation between the spiritual upliftment and moving upwards towards goodness, and spiritual degradation, moving downwards towards the gross world of sensual pleasures, leads a creature to a continuous cycle of birth and death—this oscillation is like the bouncing of a ball upwards and downwards from the surface of the earth. One must remember that a lot of symbolism, metaphors and allegories have been used in the Upanishadic texts to explain things. One should be wise not to lose the spirit while getting bogged down by the literal meaning of the words; one should not lose the wood while searching for the tree. The 'Pran' wind here symbolises the upward drift which the pure consciousness is inherently inclined to, while the 'Apaan' winds pulls it down towards the attractions of the world. The creature remains trapped between the two forces.

This 'vital wind' called Pran is one of the five elements of creation, called the Panch Bhuts, the others being earth, water, fire and sky.

The Upanishads describing the various connotations and aspects of the Pran or the vital winds are, inter alia, the following:—

(i) Sam Veda—(a) Chandogya Upanishad in its Canto 3, sections 13; Canto 5, section 1, verse nos. 1-15; Canto 5, sections 19-23 (describes how the five winds are satisfied; it also enumerates the Mantras pertaining to the five Prans); and Canto 7, section 15, verse no. 1; (b) Jabal Darshan panishad, Canto 4, verse no.23-24; (c) Maitrayanu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6-7 (which describes the functions of these winds).

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda—(a) Subalo Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no.1-14; (b) Paingalo-panishad, canto 2, verse no.3; (c) Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 5, 8-9; Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87; (d) Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 26; Canto 4, Brahman 2, verse no. 4; Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 3; Canto 5, Brahman 13; Canto 6, Brahman 1.

(iii) Krishna Yajur Veda—(a) Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. verse nos. $55^{1/2}$-60, 95-100; (b) Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 28; (c) Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto

1, verse no. 166; (d) Amritnado-panishad, verse no. 33-38; (e) Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 17-19; (f) Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 165 and Canto 5, verse no. 2; (g) Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli 3, Anuvak 3, 7; (h) Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10; (i) Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 2 (especially describes the three methods to control the Prans); (j) Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 11-12, 14-18 (which describe the fingers that are directly related to the five principal winds and the Mantras of these winds).

(iv) Atharva Veda—(a) Prashna Upanishad, Canto 2-3; Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 12-13; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no. 21.

(v) These vital winds have also been elucidated upon in sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse no.38-39.

(17) (c) The fourteen Prans or vital winds—According to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are fourteen vital winds called Prans present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaan—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaan—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, section 4, verse nos. 12-13 describes the fourteen winds, their locations and functions. Now let us see what it has to say on the subject.

"verse no. 12 = The ten Prans or vital winds symbolizing life-forces of the body that constantly move in the Naadis are the following—Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udaan, Vyaan, Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta, and Dhananjay (12).

"Verse no. 13 = The Pran (i.e. the chief vital wind) moves or is located chiefly in the mouth, the nose, the throat, the navel, the big toes of the feet, and below and above the Kundalini.

The Vyaan moves or is located chiefly in the ears, the eyes, the waist region, the thighs, the nostrils, the throat, and the hip region.

The Apaan moves or is located chiefly in the anus, the genitals, the thighs, the stomach, the testicles, the hip area, the navel, and the midriff where the fire is present (refer verse no. 4 above).

The Udaan is present and moves about in all the joints of the body.

The Samaan is present and moves about in the hands and legs (limbs) and all other appendages of the body. It also helps in equal distribution of the nutrients of the food that has been digested inside the body by the help of the fire element to all parts of the body through the network of seventy-two thousand Naadis. Hence, the Samaan wind also moves in all the seventy-two thousand Naadis and works in close association with the fire element. [There are fourteen chief Naadis listed in verse no. 9, while the closing stanza of verse no. 10 asserts that there are numerous other Naadis that form a network of Naadis exactly like the veins and capillaries seen in the leaf of a banyan tree.]

The other vital winds such as Naag etc. are subsidiary in nature and they live and move about in the skin, bones etc.

The vital winds that live in the stomach and middle part of the abdomen (i.e. the Apaan and the Samaan) help to separate the water (fluids, enzymes, digestive juices etc.) present in the stomach from the nutrients of the food eaten (after the food is digested), and then take the nutrients through the Naadis to all the parts of the body (while the fluid portion and the grosser aspect of the food left after digestion and extraction of nutrients are taken to the organs of excretion, i.e. to the kidneys and the rectum respectively).

The Apaan Vayu keeps the internal fire responsible for cooking and digesting of food eaten burning. The food eaten is literally placed on the top of the water, and the water is placed on the fire which is stoked from below so as to heat this water which in turn cooks or digests the food eaten. [This is a simple kitchen of the body. The fire of the hearth represented by the abdomen is the triangular fire area mentioned in verse no. 4. The air needed to keep the fire burning and the grate of the oven ventilated is the Apaan wind. The stomach is the pot. The fluids present in it are the water. And the chewed or pulverized food that is put in the stomach is the raw material from which the nutrients are needed to be extracted. Once this is done, the Samaan wind would take these nutrients to the different parts of the body, while the waste matter is taken to the kidneys and the anus for excretion.]

The fire element present in the body is protected by the Apaan wind as the latter helps to keep it lighted and prevents it from being extinguished. [As in the instance of the cooking of the food cited above, the Apaan wind, which is predominantly present in the lower part of the abdomen, keeps the fire alive by fanning it from the below.]

This fire when stoked by the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) gathers heat and brings to a boil the water element present in the middle part of the body (i.e. the stomach) so that the vegetables and cereals that enter the stomach are properly cooked by it—i.e. the food is properly digested and its nutrients separated from the grosser aspects of the food such as the sweat, the urine, the blood, the semen, the various juices and other fluids present in the body (viz. the bile, the pancreatic juices, the various digestive enzymes, the mucous, the hormones etc.).

Once the process of digestion and separation of the subtle aspect of the food (i.e. its life-sustaining nutrients) from the grosser aspects (e.g. the sweat, urine, blood etc.) is complete, the Samaan wind takes over. In association with the Pran wind (i.e. the breath), it takes the

vital nutrients thus segregated to all the corners of the body via the medium of the Naadis. The Pran wind meanwhile moves in and out of the body in the form of the breath. [It will be noticed here that the Pran wind, or the breath, acts like a pump that works from the surface and provides the other winds the necessary suction power to move against the forces of gravity and lift the nutrients as well as certain of the grosser parts of the food that are important for the body, such as the blood, the mucous, the bile and other juices, the hormones etc. to the upper parts of the body against the usual downward pull of gravity. This upward pull exerted by the Pran wind also helps the Apaan wind, whose natural inclination is to move downwards and out of the body, to remain inside the body and even move upwards to keep the fire element lighted, besides being able to activate the Kundalini during the process of Yoga.]

The vital winds eliminate the wastes present inside the body, such as the stool, urine, sweat etc., through the nine openings of the body into the space outside it. [The nine openings of the body are called its Doors, and they are the following—two nostrils, two ears, the hair follicles, the pores of the body, one mouth, one anus and one urinary organ which doubles up as the reproductive organ as well.]"

(17) (d) The twelve Prans or vital winds—The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 28 also says that there are twelve Prans though it does not mention them by name.

Now, according to some of the Upanishads such as Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are ten Prans, viz. Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udaan, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

Then according to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are twelve vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran, (2) Apaan, (3) Vyan, (4) Udaan, (5) Samaan, (6) Vairambh, (7) Mukhya, (8) Antarayam, (9) Prabhanjan, (10) Kurma, (11) Shyen, (12) Krishna, (13) Shwet, and (14) Naag.

So, it is hard to say which two Prans has the Varaaha Upanishad avoided in the absence of any specific names.

(17) (e) The ten Prans or vital winds—The Upanishads that describe the ten vital winds or Prans are the following—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda = Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, 1/5 and 2/77-87; Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no. 1-14; Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 3. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda = Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 165 and Canto 5, verse no. 2; Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse nos. $55^{1/2}$-57. (c) Atharva Veda = Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 12-13; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no. 21.

According to thses Upanishads, there are ten variations of the Pran or vital wind. The 'Pran' (the name given to the vital winds as a collective noun) is classified into ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. The ten winds are the following—Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udaan, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay. [Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. $55^{1/2}$-57 of Krishna Yajur Veda

tradition; Bhavana Upanishad, verse no. 2, stanza no. 21 of the Atharva Veda tradition.]

These ten Prans are divided into two broad categories—viz. the five main Prans and the five subsidiary Prans as follows:—

(a) The five main Prans, their functions and locations in the body in brief are the following—(1) Pran— this is the main vital wind and usually refers to the breath without which life is not possible; it is the vital wind located in the upper part of the body. It is the wind that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without this wind infusing life in the body no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. It is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg. (2) Apaan—this is the wind that passes down the intestines, and is responsible for ingestion of food, its digestion in the intestines and the final excretion of the waste product from the body—its grosser content through the anus and its fluid contents through the urinary system of the kidneys. This is the wind that moves down in the body and is chiefly located in the lower part of the body—in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees. (3) Samaan—it is uniformly present throughout the body and as the name itself suggests it is responsible for uniform pressure and balance in the body besides equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body by maintaining proper circulation of blood. Therefore its functions somewhat resembles that of Vyan wind. It is said to be especially present in the ears which are said to be the specialized playing field for the Samaan wind as it helps maintain balance in the body through the semi-circular canals in the ears. It also helps to coordinate the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears. (4) Udaan—this is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. It is predominantly present in the hands, legs and the various joints of the body. (5) Vyan—this wind helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body as well as to ensure equal distribution of nutrients in the body by maintaining circulation. Hence, it works in close coordination with the Samaan wind. It also helps to control the functioning of the other winds. It is located in the ears, thighs, waist region, heals, shoulders and throat. [Refer Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse nos. 5-7

(b) The five subsidiary Prans—Besides these five main Prans, the other five winds are called as junior Prans or subsidiary Prans because their main function is to aid the functioning of the main Prans. They are located in the skin, muscles and the bones. Their main functions are the following—(6) Nag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching. (7) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut. (8) Krikar— this creates the sensation of hunger. (9) Devdutta—this creates sleep. (10) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

The *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no. 2/22-24, says--

says—

"verse no. 2/22 = These vital winds called 'Prans' are grouped under five classes depending upon their role and interaction in the body of the creature, as well as their contribution in his meditative practices. Thus, we have five main categories of Prans—viz. Rechak (that which is exhaled or expelled, or helps in this process, say expelling of mucous, stool and urine), Purak (that which is inhaled or fills up the body, or helps in the process of filling up the body, say with nutrition etc.), Shoshak (that which helps in absorption, say of nutrition), Dhaahak (that which burns, keeps the internal fire ignited and helps in, say, digestion, burning waste in the body, keeping the body warm and energized), and Plaavak (that which floods or inundates; that which helps in circulation and movement) (2/22).

"verse no. 2/23 = These vital winds serve the dual role of either concluding life by scalding it or burning it ('Ksharaak'—to scald or corrode), or by holding the life together, nourish it like a son and take care of it like a child ('Daar'—to hold together; 'Daarak'—to treat like a son or child).

Similarly, they either produce excitement, agitation and discomfort for the creature ('Kshobhak') or give him pleasure and comfort by being attractive and charming for him ('Mohak'). [For instance, when the air accumulates inside the body, it produces a sense of great discomfort; the man feels bloated and develops a headache. On the other hand, a sweet and cool breeze is soothing for his nerves; the breath is another example of the air's benevolent role.] (2/23).

"verse no. 2/24 = These vital winds are absolutely necessary for all human beings; they help him to be attracted to food and helps him to digest all the four types of food—viz. that which is chewed, that which is licked, that which is sucked or sipped, and that which is drunk (2/24)."

(17) (f) The Pyramidal Structure of the Prans—The Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 26 clearly lays down the pyramidal structure of the five important vital winds. It says that Pran depends and rests upon the Apaan wind, the latter upon the Vyan wind, the latter upon the Udaan wind, and the latter upon the Samaan wind although all the Prans are equally important, and there is no distinction between the one and the other as to their importance as well as to the extent Brahm is present in them. We cannot start the counting from any particular entity, saying for example that the Pran wind is number one and more important than the other vital winds. In the present context, this structure is only to show that even in the realm of metaphysics, a hierarchy is maintained, and at the apex of this hierarchical triangle is the supreme entity from which the various vital winds derive their authority and powers and potentials. That supreme entity at the micro level is the Atma as a representative of Brahm who is the supreme authority at the macro level.

(a) Pran is evidently 'air or the wind element' because breath is air or wind, and 'Pran' is synonymous with breath. Stop the breath of a man, and he dies. Now as we know, a 'fire needs air to keep burning'. If the speech is likened to the fire, it needs the Pran in the form of wind to keep it alive by being fed with its life sustaining force. The 'wind', which is a forceful expression of the powers of 'air', is strong enough to blow away trees and even topple ships

on the high seas as is evident during severe storms. Hence, the wind, as Pran, empowers a man to do tremendously difficult tasks requiring strength, stamina, vitality and power. Pran is synonymous with breath or fresh air. At the time of creation, the Wind-God took up residence in the nostril of a man. Worship of Pran is the Adhyatmic form of worship of Brahm, while that of the air or wind is the Adhidaivic form respectively— Aeitereyo-panishad, 1/2/4. The heart is divided into five hypothetical sections and said to have five valves or apertures called Sushi (सुष्विः). These are regarded as the 'holes or doorways' through which the Pran can enter or escape the respective abodes of the Gods towards whom that particular doorways leads.

The 1st of these five is the valve opening in the 'eastern direction' of the heart through which the Pran enters it. The eyes are the apparatus by which the light of the world, both physical as well as metaphorical light of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge and erudition enter the perception centers of the mind. The world, no matter how beautiful and illuminated, will be in dark if a person does not have the eye. The Sun or Aditya symbolically resides in the eye as its patron God, or as its torch, because it illuminates the realm which the eye is able to see, for the eye cannot see in darkness. The common coefficient in both the cases (i.e. the eye and the sun) is 'light and illumination'. The sun is radiant, brilliant and splendorous with Tej (energy, radiance, splendour and glory). So this factor 'Tej' is the essence and life of the sun even as 'Pran' is the essence and life of a creature. If the sun had no 'Tej' in it, it would be worthless. Food obviously provides the basic nourishment and energy to the creature. What will the eyes do or what is the use of the sun if there is no food to eat, for in its absence the creature will not survive.

So, all these entities are the 1st categories of Gods who reside in the eastern side of the heart. They should be respected, adored and honoured for the good characteristics, noble virtues and sublime essence that they represent, and not just because they are some powerful Lord who will punish severely if not shown due respect.

The vital signs of life in a human body as shown by his powers to speak, see, hear and think are all different attributes of, or functions carried out by the supreme consciousness called Brahma residing disguised as his 'Pran' or the vital wind called breath present in his body. This 'Pran' is also synonymous with the Atma/soul, and therefore, Atma/soul is synonymous with Brahma. A man might not speak but he can see, hear and think, he might not see and speak (e.g. a blind and dumb man) but he can hear and think, he might not speak, see and hear (e.g. a dumb, blind and deaf man) but he can think. Finally he might not even think (e.g. when he is sleeping) when all his vital functions collapse into the Atma, but he still is alive. Overtly, for all external purposes, he appears to be dead because he exhibits none of the signs of life depicted by the body when he is awake, but he continues to breathe and therefore, is fully alive. He can never be treated as 'dead'. So, the factor which decides whether a man is alive or dead is not his faculty of speech or sight or hearing or thinking, but the 'Pran' present in his body. As long as he breathes, he is deemed to be alive. That is, the Atma is the entity that truthfully represents consciousness or Brahma, and any person who recognises this fact that all the patron Gods supervising the various activities of creation ultimately find rest in the Atma or

Brahma, and then re-emerge from it —as in the case when all the organs of perception and action start to function when a man wakes up from his sleep —is deemed to be an adroit, wise and enlightened person who acquires such stupendous powers that impossible things can be accomplished by him, such as for example the shifting of the mountain. The 'shifting of the mountain' is simply a figure of speech to emphasise an enlightened person's potentials and prowess than the actual and physical movement of the mountain, for the mountain, obviously, doesn't move! The word Pran broadly refers to the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life.

(b) Vyan is the vital wind that maintains equilibrium in the body. It is present everywhere in the body. The ears are the literal doors or holes through which the vital wind called Vyan entered the body and the Moon-God took its abode there at the time of creation when the 'Viraat Purush' created man in his image and ordained that the various Gods should take up residence in the various parts of the human body which corresponded to the respective part of the 'Viraat Purush' himself from which these Gods were created. The Sun was created from the Viraat's eyes, so it took up its residence in the human eye. Similarly, the Moon was created from the Viraat's ears, so it found shelter in the human ear. And so on and so forth.

Any student of biology knows that the semi-circular canals present in the ear are responsible for maintaining balance in the body. Patients of low or high blood pressure or those suffering from misbalanced pressure of air on the ear drums (the tympanic membrane) can experience fluttering of that drum, snapping sounds when inhaling as well as the sense of dizziness. This can be rectified by deeply inhaling wind, clipping the nostrils tight shut and trying to exhale. The pressure of wind causes the tympanic membrane to inflate and open the closed eustachian tube with a snap. The patient feels relieved.

The ears are the apparatus by which we 'hear and gather' information. Hence, they are the 'ventilators' of the house through which fresh air representing new information and knowledge enters, and like the ventilators, they are placed on the top. The moon is regarded as the pitcher where the Amrit or the elixir of eternity is stored by the Gods. This moon, therefore, symbolises the essential extract (nourishing elements) present in food. Every wise, erudite and knowledgeable person gets fame, renown and a following of disciples, which in turn translates into wealth and ample food to eat, and therefore these qualities represent Yash and Sampada respectively.

(c) Apaan wind is the one which goes down in the body and regulates the intake of food as well as its excretion. It is the wind which enables a person to speak because it helps to digest food which in turn provides the necessary energy to a man enabling him to gather sufficient energy to speak, for a weak and starving man can't speak much, and it is associated with the fire element because it helps the body to digest food and provide it with energy to speak. The enzymes present in the alimentary canal which digest food are all acidic or 'hot' in nature like the fire. This is why food is digested in the intestines and utilised by the body by the combined efforts of the Apaan wind, the Samaan wind and Vyan winds. Without the presence of 'heat and warmth' in the body, it would be dead, and there would be no question of eating, digesting

etc. So the importance of 'fire' cannot be overstated.

Righteousness, auspiciousness, morality, ethic etc. as well as the study of scriptures, contemplation and meditation are the different virtues which are associated with Brahm realisation, and therefore they are manifestation of his divine characters such as divine glories and virtues. That is why they are called Brahm-Tej because the elementary force operating in them is 'Brahm' as opposed to the demonic forces present in the form of worldly pursuits, thinking of worldly matters and devoting oneself to studying worldly material sciences and acquiring worldly skills which are far removed from spiritual knowledge leading to the upliftment of the soul. These features are like Christ and anti-Christ.

Since the downward peristaltic movement of the intestines helps in taking in food, digesting it and help in its excretion, the Apaan wind is likened to the ability of the body to absorb and assimilate nourishment from food, or be a 'consumer of food'. The energy trapped in the food is released in the body and empowers it to speak and to acquire all the glorious potentials that Brahm possesses, called Brahma Tej, such as the powers to think righteously, contemplate, meditate, procreate, sustain, protect and nourish the world as well as be auspicious, pious, wise and enlightened.

(d) Samaan is the vital wind that regulates circulation in the body as well as proper and balanced distribution of nourishment to all the cells of the body. The word 'Samaan' means 'equanimity, equity and uniformity'. This wind distributes food and water equitably and uniformly throughout the body, hence has the name of Samaan. The mind is associated with this wind because any disturbance in the distribution of food and water in the body will cause unrest in the mind. Also, when the mind is disturbed, it affects the whole body, thereby disturbing the equilibrium of nourishment in the cells of the body because this wind gets disturbed. Varun and water (cloud) were created by the 'Viraat Purush' from his 'Mana' (mind). Hence, the water element in the form of the cloud is also a form of Samaan wind. More practically, we see that the proper distribution of food in the body depends upon the blood which is a vehicle for such transport of the nutrients present in the food to all the parts of the body. Blood is a fluid, and fluidity depends upon the water element. Without water, the whole process of digestion and absorption will come to standstill. The mind is the epicenter of wisdom and knowledge; it is the regulatory authority of the various functions and actions of the body. A good, healthy, wise and intelligent mind will obviously lead to fame and glory. The proper maintenance of the level of fluids in the body keeps the body healthy and in prime shape with a glowing skin and a complexion full of luster.

(e) Udaan wind rises from the bottom of the body and goes up to the head. It symbolises 'elevation and levitation, upliftment and upgradation'. The word 'Udaan' itself means 'to fly, to go up'. It signifies the inclination of the man to do noble deeds and use his legs to walk higher and climb higher in the spiritual realm. It literally 'helps the soul to fly off into the sky like the bird'; hence it has the name 'Udaan'. Like the hot air balloon, any wind that helps lift a heavier-than-wind object into the air is called 'Udaan Vayu'. Since air fills the whole sky, there is

no segregation between them. It is not possible to separate the sky from the wind or air element simply because the wind or the air element has the tendency to occupy all the space that is available to it. Anything that can 'lift' a heavy body from the ground must be stronger and more powerful than the body which it lifts as well as the forces which try to pull the body down. Hence, this 'Udaan' wind is synonymous with the quality of Oj (पण्मण—strength, valour, power, potentials and prowess present in a creature). Its glory and importance in upliftment of the man, i.e. in inspiring him towards nobler pursuits and goals in life, and assiduously endeavour for realisation of Brahm makes it Maha (महः), that is important and significant, marked by greatness, grandeur, potent and majesty.

(17) (g) The four Kalaas (aspects/features) of Prans—The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 18-19 describes the four Kalaas or aspects of Pran as follows—

"Verse no. 18 = Just like the milk is churned by the churning rod, the main vital wind present in the body, called the Pran, keeps the four other forms or aspects of this vital wind, called its four Kalaas[1], to remain activated and circulating in the body through the medium of the four sections of the heart[2]. [In other words, the breath called the main Pran keeps the body alive, thereby ensuring the heart beats and helps in circulating the blood and the other four forms of the Pran inside the body.] (18).

[Note—[1]The word Kalaa refers to the different aspects or forms of an entity. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called 'Pran', and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apaan, Samaan, Udaan and Vyan. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body. This classification is done in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams or branches to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The 'Pran' is the wind element which, as breath, is exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without the life-infusing breath, no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apaan' is the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Samaan' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udaan' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyan' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

The main Pran or breath is the one which keeps the entire machinery working. If a man stops to breathe, or when his supply of fresh breath is cut off as in the case of strangulation, then neither can the heart nor the remaining four vital winds can keep him alive. The heart would cease to beat and the other four Kalaas of the Pran would become defunct as soon as the Pran (breath) is cut off.

The breath or Pran is depicted here as a 'churning rod'. If we see the structure of the wind pipe, it indeed looks like a length of pipe, resembling a churning rod, going down into the body from the opening of the nostrils.

From the metaphysical point of view, there is another dimension of this verse. The body of the man is said to have the following five Kalaas which represent the five sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's characters, temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioural patterns in this world. The Pran Maye Kosh is the churning-rod here because the rest of the body is kept alive by its energizing and revitalizing effect.

[2]The heart has four sections—two auricles and two ventricles. The four must work in harmony and with perfect coordination in order to keep the man alive. The Pran as breath keeps the heart beating and supplies fresh oxygen to the body which oxidizes and revitalizes the various tissues and organs of the body while at the same time helping to remove or purge the body of all impurities and toxins such as poisonous gases like carbon dioxide etc. that have accumulated due to metabolic activities inside it.]

"Verse no. 19 = The great and swift Bird symbolising the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature, which incidentally is the true identity of the latter, resides in a restless manner in this body[1].

When the breath stops, i.e. when the body dies, the living being called the Jiva becomes lifeless or loses all his Kalaas[2]. In other words, when the Pran leaves the body, all other vital signs of life also cease to exist, and the Jiva shows no characteristics and attributes that had distinguished it while it was alive. [This is because all dead bodies are alike. It is only when a man is alive that each individual person depicts his unique personality and character traits, his typical way of speaking, behaving, writing, interacting, thinking etc. So symbolically, when the breath is stopped, he also stops to exhibit his uniqueness and individuality. The 'Jiva' dies as soon as the breath known as the Pran stops. What remains is the 'non-Jiva' aspect of the gross body.] (19).

[Note—[1]The Atma is compared to the big bird such as a falcon or eagle or kite which is accustomed to a free-flying life in the sky being suddenly trapped in a small cage. This bird would become extremely agitated and restless.

It is 'restless' in the sense that it is never satisfied with this body and never finds peace while residing inside it. It always wants this and that; it is in a constant state of uneasiness and flux. The bird would be endlessly restless and clawing at the walls of the cage in its attempt to break free; it would be hopping mad from one corner to another in

its bid to find a way out of its prison-like confinement though no string might be tied to its legs to keep it in forced bondage and the bird-catcher might even give it proper and adequate food to eat.

It is 'swift' because as soon as it finds an opportunity it would immediately fly off to freedom. Similarly, the Atma takes a fraction of a second to leave the body when the creature dies. There is another connotation to the word 'swift'. The subtle mind is very agile and swift as it keeps on changing from subject to subject like a bird hopping around when picking grains from the ground. Even the gross body is very restless and swift in the sense that it continuously changes position form moment to moment; it is fidgety and twitchy.

In the context of the Atma which represents the creature's 'true identity and his true self', the condition is similar. The bird got caught because of its greediness and ignorance that it is being trapped when it swooped down on the bait shown by the bird-catcher. The Atma similarly got trapped in this body when it got enticed by the attractions and charms of this deluding and entrapping world. Since the world can be enjoyed by the medium of a gross body having organs of perception and action and not in the ethereal form of the Spirit and Consciousness that do not have any grossness in them, the Atma willingly fell in the trap of acquiring a body for its self. It was then too late for it; once inside the body it began to experience its horrors and limitations, and yearned for freedom.

But even as the bird is so stupid that if once given a chance to fly free it would again fall prey to another bait, the Atma of the creature also leaves one body at the time of death and re-enters another body instantly in the hope of further enjoying the material comforts proffered by the material world and the pleasure derived by the gross organs of the body, instead of remaining eternally free like the ethereal Spirit. Another reason for it to enter another body is the fact that in the earlier one the Atma had though that the deeds done by the body were actually being done by it and therefore it is entitled to their rewards or benefits. Since this is not possible in one life time and also since the last deed done would bear results after some time, the Atma takes another body. Besides this, there are many unfulfilled desires and aspirations of the previous phase of life in the earlier body which needs to be addressed by the Atma. This is the reason for it taking a new birth.

[2]As has been explained in note to verse no. 18 above, the word 'Kalaa' refers to changeable aspects of an entity. A dead body does not show any signs of life such as movement etc. It remains in a static and unchanging state. This is what is meant here—as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the latter loses all signs of change. The erroneous notion that the creature had harboured that the body is his 'true self' is used here while referring to the body as the 'Jiva'. It has already been said in the first stanza that the Atma is restless and swift—i.e. it is ever changing and agile, an aphorism for having Kalaas.]"

(17) (h) The *function* of the various vital winds or Prans—References = (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 9; Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87. (ii) Atharva Veda's Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 13.

The five main winds control all the functions in the body as described in *Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad,* Canto 1, verse no. 9. To quote—"[Now the sage describes how the five basic elements of creation called the 'Panch Bhuts' (the sky, air, fire, water, earth) are used in practice to create a perception of the world.]

The space is filled with air or wind. The latter has five forms—Samaan, Vyan, Udaan, Apaan and Pran. The Samaan wind helps in the perception of the spoken word in the form of sound heard through the ears. This sound or word is established in the space of the sky. All that is to be known or learnt by the intellect is done by means of hearing about it, and the organ that does it is the ear. The ear hears or picks up every bit of sound that it comes in contact with. It treats all sounds equally, and shut one off in preference to the other. If the ears are closed, all sounds are eliminated. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the ears are the playing field or the field of activity of the Samaan wind. Since sound travels in open space, the importance of sky element is obvious if the ears have to hear anything. This Samaan wind coordinates the ears and the intellect because the latter would base its decisions on what it hears with the aid of the ears.

The Vyan wind is discerned as the sense of touch and is felt through the medium of the skin. It is established in the air around the body in the space filled with the wind element. The hands are especially empowered to feel this wind (i.e. the hands can 'feel' a thing better than any other part of the body—such as it being soft or hard, the feel of the texture of the object, and feel whether it is hot or cold etc.). The Mana (mind) gets the 'feel' or 'hang' of the world around it by 'feeling' it or 'touching' it with the hand. To get a better idea of anything, we tend to lift it and turn it over in our hands. The Mana derives greater degree of satisfactions when it holds and feels a thing than merely hearing about it or seeing it. The sense of touch and feel as perceived by the skin of the hand is a notch better than that perceived from any other part of the body. The Vyan wind coordinates the working of the Mana and the perception of touch as exhibited by the hand and skin. This is because this wind is uniformly distributed all over the area where the body is covered by the skin.

The Udaan wind helps the eyes to see things that have a definite shape, size, contours and colour. This wind enables the legs to move and is established in the fire element (i.e. the energy required to move the body is predominantly located in the legs). When the eye sees something attractive, it inspires the legs to take the body there, and the legs move only when the Udaan wind wants. So, this wind coordinates the working of the eyes and the legs.

The Apaan wind helps the tongue to perceive the sense of taste, and it is present in the lower organs of the body (i.e. the alimentary canal) in the form of the water element. The water element predominates those places where this wind has a major role to play (as is evident from the fact that the tongue is always moist and it needs saliva to taste anything; the digestive juices present in the intestines are in liquid form; the semen is a fluid as is the urine, the latter two being the produce of the genitals and the excretory organs which ironically have a common exit; the stool in the rectum is also semi-solid, indicating the presence of water). If the Apaan wind and the water element do not work in a coordinated fashion, the intake of food, its digestion and

excretion would be badly affected. Besides it, if the body does not get proper nourishment, its memory and ability to focus on the job at hand, to study and contemplate etc. take a beating. The attention is diverted if the flatus gets incarcerated in the intestines; the man feels bloated and hypochondriac. In other words, the functioning of the 'Chitta', i.e. the ability of the mind to stay attentive and fix its self on the job at hand, the perception of taste which enables one to enjoy the food eaten and therefore better secretion of digestive juices, the movement of food in the intestines and its excretion, as also the production of semen (genital fluids), its movement and its proper implantation in the female organs—all depend upon and are coordinated by the Apaan wind.

Finally, the Pran wind reveals itself in the nose (as breath) and helps it to exhibit the ability to smell. Its other habitat is the intestines and the anus (in the form of Apaan wind) where the earth element is present in the form of faecal matter (stool). The Pran is synonymous with life as also is food, because life cannot be sustained without either the Pran or the food. Food is produced from earth. Therefore, food and earth are to be treated equally as the fifth element. A wise and erudite person is one who knows this. The nose is able to smell two genres of smells—one that is pleasant such as the aroma of delicious food or the sweet fragrance of flowers, and the other that is foul such as the stinking wind (fart) coming out of the anus. The ability to smell is controlled by the Pran wind (breath present in the nose), while at the same time this Pran is a metaphor for the life-sustaining basic ingredients and nourishment present in any food item. Food is grown on earth. The gross part of food from which all nutrients have been extracted by the body accumulates in the rectum. Hence, this food, as excreta, is called 'night soil' or 'night earth', where the word 'night' would stand for something from which life has been removed or extracted. Since such excreta (which is—food minus Pran) accumulates in the anus and rectum, the latter are said to be dominated by the earth element simply because food has its natural habitat in the earth. Pran is the wind that coordinates the functioning of life in this creation through the medium of the food, and it lives on earth in the form of all life forms that exist.] [9].

According to *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the ten Prans and their functions are as follows—

"Verse no. 77-78 = Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udaan, Vyan, Nag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay—these are the ten vital winds which move in the Naadis (the veins and nerves) of the body. Out of these, the first five (Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udaan and Uyan) are more important, and even amongst them the first two (Pran and Apaan) are considered most important [77-78].

"Verse no. 79-80 = It is the Pran (the first wind) that bears life for the creature, i.e. it is the Pran which enables the creature to move and show other signs of life. Oh exalted sage! This Pran is said to have five subtle habitats or sites where it locates itself. These are—mouth, nostrils, heart, navel and the big toe of the feet. The Apaan wind has the following locations—anus, lower part of the abdomen, upper part of thighs and the knees. (See also verse no. 109-117 below.) [79-80].

"Verse no. 81 = The Samaan wind pervades in the whole body uniformly, the Udaan wind is present in the hands, legs and all the joints of the body [81].

"Verse no. 82 = The Vyan wind stays in the ears, thighs, waist region, heels, shoulders and throat. The other five winds such as the Nag etc. are found in the skin, bones and other parts [82].

"Verse no. 83 = The Pran Vayu (wind) collects the food, water and digestive juices in the stomach and mixes them to form a paste. Thereafter, this paste is separated into different forms once again—the fiber part of the food forms the stool, the water content forms the urine, while the digestive juices form the important fluids of the body such as blood and semen etc. [83].

"Verse no. 84 = The Pran Vayu does all this independently or literally standing all by itself and seeking no help from any other wind. The Apaan Vayu helps in excretion of stool and urine from the body [84].

"Verse no. 85 = The efforts made by the Pran Vayu, the Apaan Vayu and others to accomplish their assigned tasks is aided and complimented by the Vyan Vayu. The Udaan Vayu present in the body helps the latter to rise up or get up from a sitting or reclining position. (This 'rising' is a metaphor for spiritual enhancement also.)[85].

"Verse no. 86 = The nourishment and sustenance of the body is done by the Samaan Vayu because it helps in circulation of the blood. Passing of the wind upwards, such as during belching, is done by the Nag Vayu, while opening of the eyes is done by the Kurma Vayu [86].

"Verse no. 87 = The Krikar Vayu creates hunger, the Devdutta Vayu creates sleep etc., while the Dhananjay Vayu prevents the body from getting deformed immediately after death and delays decay of it for sometime [87].

[Note—See also verse no. 1/9 of this Upanishad as well as Jabal-darshan Upanishad, canto 4, verse no.23-34 of the Sam Veda in this context. Further, Subalo-panishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 gives another version and interpretation of these vital winds in the body. This Upanishad is chapter 6 of this book.]

The *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 13 describes the functions of the vital winds as follows—" The Pran (i.e. the chief vital wind) moves or is located chiefly in the mouth, the nose, the throat, the navel, the big toes of the feet, and below and above the Kundalini.

The Vyaan moves or is located chiefly in the ears, the eyes, the waist region, the thighs, the nostrils, the throat, and the hip region.

The Apaan moves or is located chiefly in the anus, the genitals, the thighs, the stomach, the testicles, the hip area, the navel, and the midriff where the fire is present (refer verse no. 4 above).

The Udaan is present and moves about in all the joints of the body.

The Samaan is present and moves about in the hands and legs (limbs) and all other appendages of the body. It also helps in equal distribution of the nutrients of the food that has been digested inside the body by the help of the fire element to all parts of the body through the

network of seventy-two thousand Naadis. Hence, the Samaan wind also moves in all the seventy-two thousand Naadis and works in close association with the fire element. [There are fourteen chief Naadis listed in verse no. 9, while the closing stanza of verse no. 10 asserts that there are numerous other Naadis that form a network of Naadis exactly like the veins and capillaries seen in the leaf of a banyan tree.]

The other vital winds such as Naag etc. are subsidiary in nature and they live and move about in the skin, bones etc.

The vital winds that live in the stomach and middle part of the abdomen (i.e. the Apaan and the Samaan) help to separate the water (fluids, enzymes, digestive juices etc.) present in the stomach from the nutrients of the food eaten (after the food is digested), and then take the nutrients through the Naadis to all the parts of the body (while the fluid portion and the grosser aspect of the food left after digestion and extraction of nutrients are taken to the organs of excretion, i.e. to the kidneys and the rectum respectively).

The Apaan Vayu keeps the internal fire responsible for cooking and digesting of food eaten burning. The food eaten is literally placed on the top of the water, and the water is placed on the fire which is stoked from below so as to heat this water which in turn cooks or digests the food eaten. [This is a simple kitchen of the body. The fire of the hearth represented by the abdomen is the triangular fire area mentioned in verse no. 4. The air needed to keep the fire burning and the grate of the oven ventilated is the Apaan wind. The stomach is the pot. The fluids present in it are the water. And the chewed or pulverized food that is put in the stomach is the raw material from which the nutrients are needed to be extracted. Once this is done, the Samaan wind would take these nutrients to the different parts of the body, while the waste matter is taken to the kidneys and the anus for excretion.]

The fire element present in the body is protected by the Apaan wind as the latter helps to keep it lighted and prevents it from being extinguished. [As in the instance of the cooking of the food cited above, the Apaan wind, which is predominantly present in the lower part of the abdomen, keeps the fire alive by fanning it from the below.]

This fire when stoked by the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) gathers heat and brings to a boil the water element present in the middle part of the body (i.e. the stomach) so that the vegetables and cereals that enter the stomach are properly cooked by it—i.e. the food is properly digested and its nutrients separated from the grosser aspects of the food such as the sweat, the urine, the blood, the semen, the various juices and other fluids present in the body (viz. the bile, the pancreatic juices, the various digestive enzymes, the mucous, the hormones etc.).

Once the process of digestion and separation of the subtle aspect of the food (i.e. its life-sustaining nutrients) from the grosser aspects (e.g. the sweat, urine, blood etc.) is complete, the Samaan wind takes over. In association with the Pran wind (i.e. the breath), it takes the vital nutrients thus segregated to all the corners of the body via the medium of the Naadis. The Pran wind meanwhile moves in and out of the body in the form of the breath. [It will be noticed here that the Pran wind, or the breath, acts like a pump that works from the surface and

provides the other winds the necessary suction power to move against the forces of gravity and lift the nutrients as well as certain of the grosser parts of the food that are important for the body, such as the blood, the mucous, the bile and other juices, the hormones etc. to the upper parts of the body against the usual downward pull of gravity. This upward pull exerted by the Pran wind also helps the Apaan wind, whose natural inclination is to move downwards and out of the body, to remain inside the body and even move upwards to keep the fire element lighted, besides being able to activate the Kundalini during the process of Yoga.]

The vital winds eliminate the wastes present inside the body, such as the stool, urine, sweat etc., through the nine openings of the body into the space outside it. [The nine openings of the body are called its Doors, and they are the following—two nostrils, two ears, the hair follicles, the pores of the body, one mouth, one anus and one urinary organ which doubles up as the reproductive organ as well.]

[Now, the functions of the vital winds are being enumerated—] The Pran wind is responsible for breath and expelling mucous in the form of cough.

The Apaan wind is responsible for expelling stool and urine from the body.

The Vyaan wind is responsible for accepting or giving away anything.

The Udaan wind is responsible for lifting the body.

The Samaan wind is responsible for nourishing the body (as it takes the nutrients to all the parts of the body).

The Naag wind is responsible for belching and excreting of contaminated or polluted wind through the throat and mouth.

The Kurma wind is responsible for closing and opening of the eyelids.

The Krikar wind is responsible for hunger and appetite.

The Devdutta wind is responsible for creating laziness, lethargy and inertia.

The Dhananjay wind is responsible for creating cough and other types of mucous that help to expel infection from the body (in association with the Apaan, the Naag and the Pran winds (13)."

(17) (i) Location of the five chief vital winds, called the Panch Prans, in the body—References: Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse nos. 5-8; Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 79-82; Amrit Naad Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 35-36; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 97-98 describes the location of the Samaan wind.

According to the *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 79-82—(1) Pran—it is present in the mouth, nose, heart, navel, big toe of the leg; (2) Apaan—it is present in the intestines and anus, lower abdomen, thighs, knees; (3) Samaan—it is uniformly present throughout the body; (4) Udaan—it is present in the hands, legs, joints of the body; and (5) Vyan—it is located in the ears, thighs, waist, heals, shoulders, throat. The subsidiary winds as listed above, i.e. Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay are located in the skin, muscles and the bones.

The *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 35-36 describe the location of the five main Prans in the body as follows—"Verse no. 35 = The primary and principal vital wind called 'Pran' lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called 'Apaan' lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the 'Samaan' wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the 'Nabhi Kand', and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the 'Udaan' wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of 'getting up' or 'rising', so it symbolises the creature's state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to 'raise' and spit out cough present in the lungs) (35).

"Verse no. 36 = The vital wind known as 'Vyan' spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium). Now, the subtle colours of these five Prans symbolising the five forms in which the vital wind force in Nature exist are being mentioned (36)."

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 97-98 describes the location of the Samaan wind as follows—

"Verse no. 97 = This Samaan wind lives in the heart, navel, nostrils, ears and the big toe of the foot (97).

"Verse no. 98 = It (Samaan wind) also lives uniformly in all the seventy two thousand Naadis (ducts of the body) as well as in the twenty eight crore (1 crore = 10 million) roots of hairs present in the body (98)."

(17) (j) The *relationship between the fingers of the hand and the Panch Prans* or the five principal winds in the body—The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 11 describes the relationship between the five principal winds and the fingers in the hand. To quote—

"Verse no. 11 = The oblations offered to the Pran (by way of sprinkling of water) are done in the following sequence—the thumb and the little finger are used to sprinkle water meant as an oblation offered to the Pran wind, the thumb and the third finger for the Apaan wind, the thumb and the middle finger for the Vyan wind, the thumb and index finger for the Udan wind, and the thumb and all the other four fingers together for the Samaan wind (11).

[Note—It would be noted here that each finger is linked directly to a particular wind. This assumes great significance in the field of Yoga practice where various Mudras are adopted to control the different vital functions of the body along with the harnessing of the vital winds and their inherent energy and strength to obtain success in one's spiritual endeavours. During Mudras, which are the various poses of the hand and body while doing meditation, the thumb is pressed at specific points on one or the other finger, singly or collectively. This pressure of the thumb against a finger helps to exert control over the specific wind that is related to that finger, and the point on the finger determines the location of the body where this wind needs to be controlled or concentrated or manipulated for the purpose of Yoga. This is akin to the technique of acupressure wherein pressure

is applied on specific points on the body to help alleviate pains and other bodily ailments. So for example, if the need is to control the Pran wind, pressure is to be exerted by the thumb against the little finger as this finger is directly related to this particular wind. This principal is applicable to all other winds as described in this verse. It is a well organized and scientific method to cure one's self of all ailments that have their origin in disturbed vital winds in the body, which in Indian medical system is called 'Vayu Dosh', the fault of the wind. The pressure of the thumb against the relevant finger helps to modify the functioning of the wind and the part or organ of the body that is controlled by this wind.]"

(17) (k) Pran as the Vaishwanar—The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 15 describes these five Prans as the Vaishwanar. This alludes to the all-pervading and all-encompassing macrocosmic form of the supeme transcendental Brahm, called the Viraat Purush, from whom the rest of the creation has emerged.

Pran as the Fire God—The Prashna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 3 says that the Pran, or the vital life giving and sustaining winds in the body, are synonymous with the fire element. This is a metaphoric representation of the fact that the Pran provides the seminal energy, impetus and vitality to the creature to survive. Had it not been for the Pran, the body would have died. The biggest proof of the Pran being synonymous with the fire element is the fact that the body, whether awake or asleep, is warm.

(17) (l) *Origin of the Prans*—Refer: Prashna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 3; Paingalo-panishad of Skukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 3.

The Prashna Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 3 says that the origin of Pran is in the Atma (the pure consciousness).

The Paingalo-panishad of Skukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how the vital winds came into being during the process of creation of the world as follows—"After that, the supreme creator collected those parts of the individual elements which had the 'Raja Guna' (the second of the three fundamental qualities that are inherently present in the entire creation and determine its characters and specific nature) in predominance. This he divided into four segments, and took three of these to create 'Pran' (the vital winds). These are five in number—viz. Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan. Similarly, the sub-Prans are called Naag, Kurma, Krikar, Devdutta and Dhananjay.

The main or chief Pran (breath or the life infusing vital wind) has its seat in the following sites—heart, lower buttocks (in the Muladhar Chakra which is a subtle energy centre present at the lower end of the body near the anus and genitals), navel (abdomen), throat and other parts of the body."

(17) (m) *Colour* and *Beej Mantras of the vital winds*—

The *Dhyanbindu Upanishad*, verse nos. 95-97 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition not only describes the 'colours' of the five principle winds but also their 'Beej Mantras' as follows:—"Verse no. 95 = Above this so-called 'half-triangle' is the site where the brain is located, and therefore is the site where the thinking powers of the creature, the stupendous powers mind and intellect to contemplate and fix attention on something, to discriminate and analyse, to

rationalize and deduce anything systematically as well as their creative and constructive powers of imagination are located. [This area is the cerebrum.]

A wise practitioner should meditate and contemplate upon the primary elements along with their primary colours and their relevant Beej Mantras here.

Therefore, he should next meditate and contemplate upon the basic elements of creation such as the earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and space) as well as the five vital Prans (winds such Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan) along with their root words (called the 'Beej' Mantra or the basic letter that symbolises them and represents their inherent subtle strength and powers), their specific distinguishing marks and classifications (called their 'Varns'), and their locations (called their 'Sthaan') in this creation.

The Beej or seed letter of the Pran wind (the primary air which infuses life inside the gross body; the breath) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ya'. It has the hue of purple or violet or reddish blue, and it represents the rain bearing clouds that are harbingers of life on earth.

The Beej or seed letter of the Apaan wind (the primary air which moves downwards in the body and helps in food intake and its movement through the intestines, its digestion and elimination from the body) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ra'. It has the hue of golden yellow resembling the brilliant sun, and represents the fire element (95).

"Verse no. 96 = The Beej or seed letter of the Vyan wind (the primary wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'La'. It has the hue of red like the colour of the flower called 'Bandhuk' (a flower that blooms in the middle of the day), and it represents the earth element.

The Beej or seed letter of the Udaan wind (the primary wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Va'. It has the hue of shining white like that of the conch shell, and it represents the Jiva or the living being in this creation (96).

"Verse no. 97 = The Beej or seed letter of the Samaan wind (the primary wind that helps the body in equal distribution of nourishment throughout it, as well as in the circulation of blood) is the Sanskrit alphabet 'Ha'. It has the hue of the colour crystal, and it represents the taintless, colourless and pristine pure sky element in creation.

This Samaan wind lives in the heart, navel, nostrils, ears and the big toe of the foot (97).

According to *Amrit Naad Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 37-38 describes the colours of the Prans as follows—

"Verse no. 37 = The main Pran (breath which is at the core of life) is said to be red-coloured like a ruby. [This is a symbolic representation of the fact that this from of air is rich in oxygen, which in turn oxidizes the cells and help in producing red-blood corpuscles and hemoglobin in the body.]

The Apaan wind present in the anus is like a red-coloured insect called 'Indragop' or an insect called 'Birbahuti' which has a scarlet colour like velvet and appears when the first rain falls. [That is why the anus region is red in colour, and malfunctioning of this vital wind creates piles which are red in colour, or bleeding dysentery or diarrhea which is also red in colour.] (37).

"Verse no. 38 = The Samaan wind is located in the area of the navel and is said to be white like cow's mild or alum. [This is indicative of the presence of mucous and lymph and other intercellular and inter-muscular fluids in the body which are not red in colour as blood is.]

The Udaan wind is smoky and grey in colour (like the fluffy clouds floating across the sky). [And that is why the cough or mucous raised in the throat is predominantly of this colour.]

Finally, the Vyan wind has the glorious and splendorous colour like the tip of the flame of a burning candle. [This indicates that the flame is steady and burning brightly, without being subjected to any disturbances from any external factor, such as a gust of wind. Hence, this Vyan wind maintains a healthy and well-proportioned body which is not disturbed by any worldly influences. Such a healthy body has a radiant and glowing appearance, and its skin is taut and thus literally shines in the pink of its health.] (38)."

The *Mantras pertaining to the five Prans*—The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12 describes the Mantras which are used to honour the five vital winds as follows—

"Verse no. 12 = The five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently[1] remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called Pran[2] (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the Pran wind—OM Pranaye Swaha).

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called 'Ahawaniya[3]' by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the Apaan wind—OM Apanaye Swaha).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called 'Dakshinagni[4]' by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the Vyan wind—OM Vyanaye Swaha).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called 'Garhapatya[5]' by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the Udaan wind—OM Udanaye Swaha).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called 'Sarwa-Praschitya[6]' by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the Samaan wind—OM Samanaye Swaha) (12).

[Note—[1]The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called 'Deha' or body because it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the 'fire pit' of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this

body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathvalli or Katho-panishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.

The five holy fires mentioned in this Upanishad are the following—(i) [2]Pran or breath. This is considered as the 'fire' from the practical point of view also as it is to be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of fresh air; otherwise it would be extinguished and life that depends upon air is suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all the other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because no life is sustainable and tenable without fresh air which is here referred to as the 'Pran', and therefore death would ensue. So, the breath, the Pran wind, is the most important aspect of life, and as such is a metaphor for 'fire' inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) [3]Ahawaniya is the fire lit to invoke the Gods and invite them to come and accept the offerings during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) [4]Dakshinagni is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) [5]Garhyapatya' is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) [6]Sarwa-praschitya Agni—which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins. This is symbolic way of burning all past sins along with their results, and thereby becoming purified and cleansed.]"

The Mantras pertaining to the five Prans have also been described in Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 5, sections 19-23.

(17) (n) *Names of the vital winds*—This Dhyanbindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda also states in its verse nos. 99-100 emphasises the fact that the different names given to these vital winds are artificial and actually there is no difference between them. To quote these verses:—

"Verse no. 99 = It is to be noted that Pran wind and Samaan wind are not two distinct winds but are essentially the same wind element hypothetically classified into two types just for the sake of convenience of study—primarily they are one, they refer to the same living entity which cannot survive even for a fleeting second without the presence of any one of them.

So a wise practitioner of meditation should steady his mind and attention, and not allow it to be stupidly and unduly get disturbed in futile debates about these artificial classifications

of life giving entities known by different names. Thus, becoming steady in his convictions, he should diligently practice the three phases of Pranayam such as Purak (inhaling wind or air), Kumbhak (filling the body with this inhaled air and holding it inside for certain time) and Rechak (exhaling this trapped air from the body). [This would help in mixing all the winds in the body, because no artificial boundaries are present inside the body that could prevent the various winds from mixing freely.] (99).

"Verse no. 100 = He should draw all the forms of the wind element from different parts of the body and concentrate them into the core of the subtle heart (where his pure conscious 'self', the Atma, resides). To enable this to happen, he would have to prevent the vital winds from escaping from the body by stopping their exit in the form of the Pran wind (the exhaled breath) and Apaan wind (the flatulence passing out of the anus).

To aid in this enterprise, he should focus his attention of meditating upon OM in a holistic way (100)."

(17) (o) The *relationship between Pran (vital winds) and the food eaten* by the creature has been succinctly elucidated in Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 3, Anuvak 7. Let us see what it has to say—"1. One should make a vow not to criticise or contemptibly treat Anna or food[1]. Pran is Anna, and the body is the consumer of this form of food[2]. Both are dependant upon each other[3].

Since the gross body called the 'Anna Maye Kosh'—or the food sheath as it is formed from what the creature eats—in which the pure self of the creature called its Atma lives, and since Pran also lives in it in the form of its 'vital life' and the various 'vital winds' which enables the body to survive, perform its different functions, and live a fruitful life, it can be safely said that 'Pran lives inside Pran'[4].

A wise aspirant who is erudite and sagacious enough to understand this unique concept is firmly convinced of its veracity, and therefore he respects food and its eclectic divine virtues. Consequently, he is able to acquire the ability to digest food[5], and become prosperous and famed. He is well off with abundant livestock and offspring, and gets a good name and respect in the world (1).

[Note—[1]This tenet of respecting food for its life sustaining properties is very relevant today also as it was many centuries ago when the Upanishads were composed as the world faces acute unprecedented food crisis. As with other edicts of the Upanishads, directions given by erudite seers and sages ages ago are timeless ones, and they are evergreen no matter which time zone or geographical area they are applied to. Food is not to be wasted, and it ought to be shared with everyone even as the Atma and Pran are no single person's fiefdom. This is borne out by the next observation in this verse that Anna is Pran. Pran is another word for 'wind or air' element, and wind or air cannot be restricted in the barn of the rich hoarder.

[2]Pran is a synonym of 'life' and of the 'vital winds' that sustain life in the body of a living creature. A body consumes fresh air in the form of breath rich is oxygen ; it inhales fresh air and expels impurities laden air rich is carbon dioxide and other gases much like a chimney in a factory. At the same time, it also uses the other forms of the

same air element present inside it to keep going normally. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the body 'consumes' Pran.

The various vital winds called Pran present in the body are the following—(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaan, the wind that passes down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Samaan, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaan, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are—(1) Naag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikar—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

According to Subalo Upanishad, canto 9, verse no.1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, these twelve vital winds present in the body have the following functions—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaan—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaan—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

[3]The body cannot survive without Pran because Pran means breath as well as the other vital winds that sustain the body form inside and help it to carry on with its functions and if one stops breathing, for instance, one would immediately suffocate to death), and the Pran needs the body to dwell and have its importance displayed because it is the ability of the ordinary air element to keep the otherwise dead and inane body alive and active that it is so lauded and revered in this world. Had the wind or air element failed to do so, who would have bothered to honour them, for no one pays heed to things which are not of direct utility to him. Air is universally present everywhere, but one honours it in the 'form of Pran' and not in any other form as far as life on this earth is concerned. And this honour is available to Pran as long as there are creatures with a body, for

otherwise it won't be respected by dead bodies, or by a machine that does not need Pran and therefore it would not need to pay its tribute to it.

In brief, the honour and respect available to Pran, the utility of Pran is only till the time there are creatures with a body that need to breathe and depend upon the vital airs to function. This is a symbiosis relationship between the Pran and the body of the creature.

[4]There is another way of looking at this concept of Pran living in Pran. Food has an inherent virtue of sustaining life, and life is the basic factor that lends value to food. Both are inter-dependent. Thus we can say that 'life (Pran) lives in life (its life sustaining properties), and vice versa (life sustaining properties are inherent and integral to Pran)'.

[5]When one begins to treat Anna or food as a divine blessing for the living world and a personification of Brahm in the form of the life-giving vitality and energy present in food, called the 'Pran of Anna', he begins to pay it great respect that is usually reserved for some deity. So he stops indulging in overeating as well as gobbling up junk food for the purposes of satisfying his taste buds, and instead eats with diligence and wisdom only things which are nutritious for the body.]

(17) (p) *Relationship between the Pran (vital airs) and the Atma*—References: Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-12; Katho-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse nos. 35-38; Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse nos. 1-2; Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 17.

The *Katho-panishad*, Canto 2, Valli 2, verse no. 10 uses the analogy of the universal air element to describe how the same Atma that resides uniformaly in all the inidivual creatures assumes different characterists and names according to the circumstances and the body in which it resides. To quote—"10. Even as the wind or air element which is universally present throughout the creation, pervading in it uniformly, is one, immutable and indivisible, but it appears to have different names, shows different virtues and characteristics which give it different dimensions depending upon the needs and forms it takes[1], the supreme transcendental Being known as Brahm similarly appears to be of so many myriad forms having uncountable characteristics depending upon the form it assumes in this creation. That is, the same Brahm in the form of the Atma, the pure conscious 'self', is known by different names and shows different characteristic features depending upon the gross body that the creature takes in each of his births although Brahm and its synonym Atma are basically one, immutable, indivisible and non-dual pure consciousness that powers everything that exists in this creation.

Verily, this Brahm is the Atma which is present inside the creature as its pure consciousness as well as outside of it as the macrocosmic Consciousness of the entire creation (10).

[Note—[1]The wind has so many names, such as typhoon, hurricane, storm, cyclone, tornado, twister, gale, breeze, whirlwind, current of air and stream of air etc. but it does not change the basic fact that all these are names given to the same dynamic force of Nature known as the wind element. It is air which fills the entire void of the space of the sky and is called as ether at the cosmic plane and atmosphere in the context of the earth

and other planets.

Wind or air represents the grand virtue of Brahm to show 'movement' and 'life-injecting' capabilities. When the process of creation was set in motion, the elements that successively came into being were sky, air, fire, water and earth. We notice that the order starts with the element that was the subtlest, i.e. sky, and reached the element that is the grossest, i.e. earth. The rest occupy a space in between in decreasing order of subtlety. If the creation was to maintain its self then it must have 'mobility', and since the sky does not move, Brahm decided to create the air element took care of this aspect. There was another bonus—this air virtually moved from one place to another to spread the 'good news' that the supreme Lord has decided to renew vibrant forms of life from the dismal dark that prevailed after the last doomsday deluge. Like the herald of the King, the air element went to all the corners of the cosmos to spread the good news about the arrival of Brahm. This is a metaphoric way of saying that consciousness would now spread throughout the length and breadth of the cosmos like ink gradually spreading in a tumbler of water to colour the whole water in its likeness! By and by, it would be impossible to distinguish this colour from the water. Similarly, it became impossible to separate the consciousness from this creation. In other words, the Brahm became universally present in the entire creation as the air element that is also universally present in all the corners of the world.

The same wind or air element has been assigned different names when it resides inside the body of a creature and helps it to carry on its functions. The Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition asserts that there are twelve vital winds present in the body. It lists their functions as follows—(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaan—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaan—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (6) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (7) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (8) Antarayam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (9) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (10) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse10); (11) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (12) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (13) Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (14) Naag—this controls the 'Chitta' or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

According to the *Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad*, 1/5 and 2/77-87, as well as *Paingalo-panishad*, Cantos 2, verse nos.3 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, this vital wind is of ten types depending upon the function that the wind element performs in the body of a creature. Amongst them, there are five winds which are considered more important than the rest. As such, these five are called the main 'Pran', or 'Panch Prans', and they are the following :—(1) Pran, the wind element, as breath, that is exhaled as well as inhaled, and which is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature; (2) Apaan, the wind that passes

down the intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys); (3) Samaan, the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood; (4) Udaan, the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough; and (5) Vyan, the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

Besides the above, there are five subsidiary winds which act more like assistants to the chief Prans. They are— (1) Naag—this junior wind which helps in exhaling breath and belching; (2) Kurma—this subsidiary wind helps the eyelids to open and shut; (3) Krikar—this creates the sensation of hunger; (4) Devdutta—this creates sleep; and (5) Dhananjay—it prevents decay and deformation of the body immediately after death for some time.

So the basic idea is that inspite of the fact that the wind or air is the same element everywhere, it is given different names and assumes different functions depending upon the given circumstance. Similarly, the same consciousness is given different names according to the body that it assumes and the functions that it performs in the scheme of things of creation. But when one peers deep and understands the fundamental principle, he realises that what is seen externally is very misleading and illusive. The hidden fact is quite the contrary, and it is that the same Brahm present in myriad of forms in this creation.]"

Prans and the Atma are synonymous with each other—The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 17 proclaims that the Prans and the Atma are synonymous with each other. To quote—"This essential entity known as the Atma (soul or pure consciousness) of the living being (creature) is pure and wholesome like the clarified butter which is extracted by churning the milk, and is a refined and purest essence present in it[1].

This Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of life called the 'Panch Prans', or the five forms in which life exists in this world[2] (17).

[Note—[1]In other words, the Atma is the purest form of life in this world. It is the real essence of life in all its forms. It is immaculate and uncorrupt; it is wholesome and without any faults associated with the world much like the butter which has nothing to do with the adulteration of milk with water, for once the butter is extracted from milk it loses its wholesomeness. The 'churning' of the milk is a symbolic way of indicating that the Atma is hidden in this world and can be known only be diligent effort, by deep research and contemplation, by doing meditation and study.

[2]The five forms of life or Pran refer to the five basic elements in existence—such as earth, water, fire, air and sky. These five are the fundamental building blocks of life much like the atoms which are at the core of the molecules that combine in various permutations to metamorphose into the uncountable number and variety of gross things in this world. Taken in their physical elementary forms, all of them are lifeless entities, but the great mystery of creation is that the same elements exhibit stupendous life-bearing abilities in this world in their subtle forms. Thus, there must be some mystical

power that helps them do so, and it is this power that is being referred to here as the consciousness or Atma. When these elements are injected with the Atma, they begin to show vital signs of life and activity. To illustrate this point, we can take a simple example of a balloon. When the balloon is filled with air, it tosses about on its own; if it is filled with some light gas, it even rises on its own to reach high altitudes. The earth is a lifeless clod of mud or hard rock, but the same earth harbours an astounding variety of vibrant life forms in its bosom. The factor that helps bring about this is known as he Atma.

The five Prans are also called the five forms of the air or wind element which infuses life in the creature's body. These five vital airs are the following—Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Udaan and Vyan. The statement that 'the Atma is known by the five dimensions or parameters of Pran' establishes that the two entities—the Atma and the Pran—are synonymous with each other; they are like the two sides of the same coin known as 'life'.

The five forms of Prans are called the Atma's five 'Kalaas'.]

(17) (q) *Pran as a manifestation of Brahm*—References: Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 4, verse no. 17; Taittiriya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 3, Anuvak 3;

The importance and significance of Pran as a manifestation of Brahm has been described in *Taittiriya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 3, Anuvak 3. To quote—"This Anuvak highlights the importance and significance of Pran as a manifestation of Brahm. Upon doing severe Tapa, Bhrigu understood the truth of the statement that Pran is Brahm personified[1]. Verily, all the forms of life and living creatures have their origin in Pran; upon birth they depend upon Pran for their survival; and upon death they become one with Pran[2].

After that, he once approached his father Varun, seeking more knowledge about Brahm. 'Oh father! Please preach me more about Brahm'.

Varun advised him—'You should try to realise and understand Brahm by the medium of Tapa. Tapa is Brahm personified; Brahm is known by doing Tapa' (1).

[Note—[1]Pran is a synonym of life forces present in this creation, especially in relation to the body of the creature. It also supports life in the form of the vital winds which are also called Pran. Since Brahm has these virtues, and since Pran is wind in its basic form, it is an apt personification of Brahm. Nothing can survive in a vacuum if there is no air to breathe life into it, so Pran is Brahm as Brahm fills up all available space in creation even as the air element fills up the entire length and width of the space of the sky in creation. The importance of Pran vis-à-vis Brahm has been explained in note to Anuvak no. 1 above.

[2]Obviously, the word Pran here refers to the vital wind or air which is breath and other vital winds in the body, such as Apaan, Udaan, Vyan and Samaan etc. which sustain life in the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body and helps it to carry on with its functions. When the creature dies, its vital winds leave the body and merge with the air element present outside the body just like the air present inside the balloon merges with the atmospheric air when the balloon is punctured.]"

(17) (r) *The importance of Pran over other patron Gods of the body's organs*—This fact has been stressed in the following Upanishads: Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, Brahman 3, verse nos. 2-27, Canto 6, Brahman 1, verse nos. 7-14; Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 5, section 1, verse nos. 6-15; Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 2-3.

The Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 5-13 is entirely dedicated to the praise of Pran as the supreme God of creation, while Canto 3 describes the close relationship between the Pran and the Atma of the creature.

(17) (s) *Movement of the Pran*—The Pran oscillates between the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness and the Supta or sleeping state of consciousness as described in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 16-18, 34-35; Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 13.

. During the Swapna or dreaming state of existence, the Pran is said to move in the Naadis. This is described in the Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 12 which says that when the creature is in a dreaming state of existence, i.e. when he is asleep, his Prans move along the various Naadis present in the body. This movement has also been described in the Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad of Rig Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 19; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 20; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 58-60.

Now let us see what the Paingalo-panishad and the Dhyan Bindu Upanishad say on the subject of Pran moving in the Naadis during the dreaming state of existence:—

(a) The *Paingal Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse no. 12—"When the organs of perceptions and actions withdraw from their respective activities, when the creature stops to act like a 'customer' of any object or thing 'offered' to it by the external world (in the form of enchanting perceptions that entice the sense organs of perceptions to remain hooked and engrossed in this world, and the enjoyment and pleasure that is derived by doing various deeds by the organs of actions), it is then it is said to be in a state of sleep called 'dreaming'. In this state, when the pure consciousness need not interact with the world through the gross body, the world virtually exists for it in the 'Naadis' (the ducts or channels in the body, such as the veins and nerves) through which it keeps dreaming of the same experiences. These Naadis keep the subtle body alive and active (i.e. though the man is sleeping, his mind forming the subtle body is very much active). The state in which the pure conscious Atma exists during the sleeping state of dreams is called 'Taijas', because it showcases the stupendous powers, potentials and authority of the mind to conjure up a virtual-world which is almost similar to the actual world in which the Atma was living when it was in the waking state of existence. The only difference being that now that world exists only in the mind, and the vital winds that had been activating the various sense organs of the body and keeping them in contact with the external world earlier in the waking state, are now moving through the various Naadis in the body and keep the mind and sub-conscious active. [That is why, though the man looks apparently 'dead' while asleep because all his external organs are not functioning and he shows no signs of life, his nerves and veins are

very much active and kicking, providing the necessary stimuli to the mind to help it to conjure up a 'world of dreams', thereby enabling the Atma to 'live in the world of dreams'. The pure conscious Atma of the creature, it would be observed, sees the world at two levels or planes—one is through the gross body during the waking state, and the other is through the subtle body during the dreaming state. The mind plays a central, active and important role in both the cases. During the waking state, the conscious part of the mind is active, receiving inputs from the external world, analyzing them, ordering the organs of action to respond, and storing data for future referral. During the dreaming state, the mind's sub-conscious part takes over and becomes dominant factor. Since the mind does not find any rest in both the cases, and it does not let the Atma rest too for it constantly bombards the latter with newer information and inputs, both of them become tired and weary. They do not find true rest, peace, bliss and happiness. For both of them, whether the body is wide awake or it is sleeping, makes no difference.]

The Atma is surrounded by a veil of Vasanas and Vrittis (i.e. the inherent tendencies and habits that it had inherited from its past and which shape its present passions, desires, inclinations and behaviours). These help the Atma to create its own imaginary world that it is fond of and that is in consonance with its desires and expectations. It then begins to enjoy this world in its dreams much in the same way as it was enjoying the physical world when awake. [This is possible in the dreaming state and not in the waking state because now the stupendous powers of the mind to imagine and create are free to have their run as there are no encumbrances or hurdles imposed upon it by the physical limitations of the gross body. For example, if the mind feels like flying, it can do so in the dream with the help of the various vital winds moving through the Naadis, while it is not possible to do so with the limitation of the gross body during the waking state.] (12)."

(b) *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse nos. 58-60—

"Verse no. 58 = The subtle vital forces of life called Pran collectively move and oscillate in these thousands of Naadis, injecting life or 'Pran' into the otherwise lifeless gross body of the creature. The living beings move up and down under the influence of the Pran and Apaan respectively[1] (58).

[Note—[1]In metaphysical terms this means that they attain spiritual upliftment when their Pran is more active, while they get demoted to the mundane world of lowly life marked by grossness and inertia when the Apaan wind is more active. In more physical terms the movement of Pran refers to the process of breathing, while the movement of Apaan refers to the peristaltic movement that helps the food to move down the intestines. The breath (Pran) which brings in fresh oxygen-laden air inside the body and helps to rejuvenate the tissues on the one hand and removes toxic gases and other lighter waste products of the body when it is exhaled, and the movement of food in the alimentary canal, its digestion and expulsion of waste products from the body governed by the Apaan wind are both essential and indispensable parts of life because no life can survive without either of them.]

"Verse nos. 59-60 = The Pran (here referring to the breath passing through the nostrils when one breathes) moves sometimes through the path which goes to the left (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Ida Naadi passing up to the left nostril), and sometimes through the one that goes to the right (of the central Sushumna Naadi, i.e. through the Pingla Naadi passing up to the right nostril). The Pran wind is so subtle and sublime that it cannot be visibly seen.

Just like a ball thrown at random by the player moves restlessly in various directions, bouncing here and there and changing its course every now and then unpredictably, the creature is also buffeted and kicked around (like the ball)[1] by the two prominent winds called the Pran and Apaan, and he moves restlessly in so many places (and in so many wombs or takes so many births).

The tug and pull of these two winds on the creature is much like a bird being pulled down by the string tied to its legs while it attempts to fly off in the sky[2]. An ascetic who is well acquainted with this fact is regarded as really wise and enlightened (58-60).

[Note—[1]The same idea has been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 27-28 of Sam Veda tradition. It says—"Just like a ball or balloon being throne or kicked around by players, a creature (an individual) cannot remain stable and steady for long because it is under the spell of Pran, Apaan and other vital winds which constantly keep it restless, agitated, always mobile and fidgety and in a state of constant flux (27).

The creature, under the buffeting influence or thrust of the vital winds or airs, is compelled to move upwards or downwards, to the left and to the right (like an air-filled balloon) so swiftly that it loses its bearings and does not know what is happening to it2 (28) [27-28]".

These winds slap and dash against the sail of a ship on a high sea, as it were, tossing and turning it with the lashing of every gust. The creature cannot sit quietly and calmly in the ship because these vital wind forces continue to flap and flutter the sail, whipping the ship recklessly in the churning waters of the sea represented by this world.

The creature's body is like the balloon or a football, as it is filled with air called the vital winds. Even as a balloon or an air-filled light ball moves with the slightest touch, is easily tossed about violently in a squall or gale and it cannot remain at a single point for long even when there is no apparent breeze blowing, the creature also has an inbuilt and inherent natural tendency to be always on the move, remain restless and be fidgety. The biggest proof of this fact is witnessed when a dead body is observed. All the rest of the organs of a body while it was alive are present in a corpse, the only imperceptible element which has left the body is 'Pran' or the vital wind. The corpse becomes heavy than a living man and it lies motionless if it is not moved by others; it has no capacity to move on its own and it becomes heavy like lead. So it is clear that it was the 'Pran' that made the body light weight, agile and active much like the air-filled balloon or ball. Once the Pran leaves the body, the latter becomes heavy as lead.

The creature is flung around so rapidly in quick succession in waves of emotions and sentiments originating in its heart and mind due to the various influences of the external world that it is not able to discern and make out what is transpiring. It becomes

completely disoriented in the topsy-turvy path of transmigration. It does not get a chance to bring itself together and realise who it is, what it truly is, where does it belong, what is the correct direction it should take and which direction it is actually heading to, where should it go and where it should not. Taking the example of a boat in a stormy high sea, the harried creature is so rapidly hurled and tossed about like a ball and thrown over board that it is more concerned with grabbing any float at hand just to avoid getting drowned than to focus on long term spiritual goals of life. Its immediate concern is the survival in the next moment, and not the moment beyond the first. Another good example would be a balloon or a dry leaf or a kite caught in a storm. There is no need to elaborate what happens to them. The allegory will aptly summarise the comic but alarming situation the trapped creature faces.

[2]The analogy of the bird is used here to emphasise the point that the creature has a natural tendency to remain free like the bird, but it allows itself to be tied voluntarily in shackles of delusions pertaining to this world out of its own ignorance, and its unending greed and desires, and gets trapped as a result much like the bird which falls for the trap laid for it by the cunning bird-catcher. The tug and pull in the world with its astounding variety of magnificent charms and fascinating colours, no matter how transient and horrifying they are in the long run, are nevertheless very enthralling and captivating for the time being for the creature, and the latter has no inclination to look ahead and see the horrendous consequences of falling for them. This is the 'downward pull of the Apaan wind', used here in a metaphoric way because it is this wind that moves down the body through the intestines and helps to push the eaten food down the alimentary canal and out through the anus. On the other hand, the Pran moves in the upwards directions as is obvious when we observe the breath which moves out of the lungs and goes up to the nostril to be exhaled. This 'upwards movement of the Pran' is a metaphoric way of saying that the creature is seeking spiritual upliftment, it is 'looking up'.]"

(17) (t) The *patron Gods of the Prans* (the vital winds)—References: Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8; Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, verse nos. 8-9.

The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8 lists the various Gods of the Prans. These Gods symbolise the various virtues of Pran and move in the various Naadis (ducts) in the body to keep it alive. Now let us see what it has to say—"there are said to be twelve organs[1] through which the entire physical world has been revealed. The creation has been classified into three categories—Adhyatmic (the causal world pertaining to the Atma or spirit), Adhibhautic (the gross world visible around us on the earth), and Adhidaivic (the subtle world of the Gods).

There are twelve Gods such as the Moon, Brahma (the creator), Lokpals (the custodians of the different directions of the world), Vayu (the Wind God), the Sun, Varun (the Water God), Ashwini-kumars (the twin sons of the Sun God and regarded in mythology as the Gods' physician), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods; the controller of life giving rains), Upendra (Lord Vishnu, the sustainer), Prajapati (the care takers of the subjects of creation created by Brahma and responsible for carrying the process of creation forward), and Yam

(the Death God and who judges the creature after death).

They are the patron Gods of the twelve organs and they have their subtle abode in the twelve principal Naadis (nerves or veins or ducts or channels) of the body associated with these organs. These twelve Gods are also called the subtle parts of Pran or the vital wind which is synonymous with life or the Atma or pure consciousness of the creature[2]. A person who is acquainted with the twelve organs , their gross and subtle forms as well as their patron Gods, is indeed considered to be learned, sagacious, wise and scholarly [8].

[Note—(1) [1]The twelve organs referred to in the above verse are the following:— the 6 organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue, skin) + 6 organs of action (mouth, hand, leg, anus, genital) + heart + mind = 12.

(2) [2]The Gods are the personifications of the various forces of Nature that govern life. Since the Atma is an embodiment of life as well as a synonym of life, these so-called Gods are an intrinsic and integral part of the Atma. They cannot be separated from the Atma even as the latter also cannot be separated from the former. Pran and the Atma are also synonyms; both coexist in the body of the creature, and its life depends equally upon both. Whereas the Atma is pure consciousness, the Pran is the vital wind, but the term consciousness is synonymous with life as much as the word Pran. Hence, these twelve Gods represent the Atma performing different functions in their forms; the Atma exercises control over the entire creation in its manifestation as these twelve Gods. The Atma is a composite of these Gods.]"

The *Prashna Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 8-9 describes the patron Gods of the vital winds as follows—

"verse no. 8 = The Sun is the external form of the Pran. The Sun obliges the Pran or consciousness that resides in the eye when it rises in the morning. [The Sun is the patron God of the main vital wind called Pran. Since the Sun is high up in the heaven called the Duloka, the Pran wind has a natural tendency to move upwards. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the natural inclination of the Pran or the Atma is to reach nobler and higher goals in life. When one fixes one's eyes on a noble target, the Pran feels excited and motivated to put in its best. Presently, the eyes can see anything only in the light of the Sun during the daytime. The faculty of sight located in the eye is useful and can become effective only if there is light in the world. Otherwise, even though the eye is there in the body the latter would not be able to see anything, and as far as the creature is concerned the existence of the eye that cannot see is as good as the body which has no eye. So, it is the Sun that obliges the eye in as much as the latter's value is established only due to light of the Sun. The eye is always eager to look forward to the presence of the Sun to provide it with light to see. Since verse no. 5 of this Canto 3 has established that the chief Pran activates the consciousness or life (faculty of sight) in the eye, and earlier Canto 1, verse nos. 5-8, 10 has already established that the Sun God is the life of everything that exists, it obviously follows that the Sun is the external form of the chief Pran that resides in the eye and which enables the creature to live a meaningful and fruitful life on earth.]

The patron God of earth, i.e. the God named Prithivi, attracts the Apaan Vayu, the wind in the lower part of the creature. [That is why the Apaan wind has a tendency to move

downwards. The earth pulls it towards itself. The location of the Apaan wind in the anus is symbolic of the earth because all residue matter of the food is accumulated here, and this is why stool is called night 'soil'—implying 'earth'.]

The vacant space between the two, i.e. between the Sun and the Prithivi, is called the sky or Akash. It is here that the Samaan wind resides. [This is indicative of the sac-like abdomen located between the eye and the anus. Even as the sky harbours everything in existence, all the gross bodies of the solar system find their habitat in this space, the abdomen too harbours all the major organs of the body. Since the air is uniformly distributed in this sky, it is called 'Samaan'—literally meaning equal and even.]

Since the wind or air present in the sky is all-pervading and all-encompassing, it is called Vyaan (8).

"Verse no. 9 = The energetic and dynamic cosmic power called the 'Tej' (literally meaning energy, heat, light, radiance, strength, vitality and stamina) that helps the Pran to fly or keep afloat is called Udaan (literally meaning to fly and take off), and it is personified as the vital wind of this name inside the body. [That is, the Tej is the patron God of the Udaan wind. The Udaan wind personifies the glorious ability of the divine forces of Nature to provide the impetus, the energy, heat, vitality and strength to the entities of creation to lift themselves up from the lower level of existence and reach for higher goals in life. In other words, the Udaan wind is that aspect of the Pran which helps the creature to get up, to wake up and rise, or to lift his self and 'fly'. All the other vital winds keep on moving and performing their functions because they are empowered and energized by this hidden dynamic force called the Udaan. Since the Sun is a personified form of all the glorious virtues that the word 'Tej' stands for, such as energy, dynamism, heat, light, strength, vitality, stamina, the Sun is treated as being synonymous with Tej. It is the Sun God that inspires the Pran to do what it does.]

Hence, those persons in whom this Udaan wind dies down, calms down, loses its strength and energy, or gets dissipated, their sense organs do not show life and cannot carry on with their functions. In such a situation, these sense organs retract themselves and collapse into the Mana (the mind). In other words, since the desires of the sense organs are yet unfulfilled because of the inability of these sense organs to act as they had wanted to act due to the dissipation of the Udaan wind, the unrequited desires, aspirations and hopes are ensconced in the Mana or mind, waiting for an opportunity to leap forward and regain lost territory[1].

So, this paves the way for the creature taking a new birth to fulfill his unfulfilled desires, wants, aspirations, hopes and expectations (9).

[Note—[1]The creature has a great desire to do something or achieve some target, but he has lost the energy, the strength, the vitality, the stamina and the ability of the vital winds to inspire and keep the sense organs working so that the aim can be achieved. In such a situation, the desires and aspirations remain unrequited and unfulfilled. In other words, the Mana or the mind continues to harbour these desires, aspirations, wants and yearnings. In fact, the inability to obtain something only goes to stoke the fire of desires more ferociously. They become fierce and stubborn. This compels the creature to continuously think about them while he is still alive, and at the time of death his Atma would yearn to

acquire another body so that the unfilled task of the previous life can be completed.]

(17) (u) *The relationship and the difference between the Pran wind and the Apaan wind* have been explained in the Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 3, verse no. 9 in the context of speech. Let us see what it says—"When the Pran Vayu (the vital winds of the body, especially the breath and the one which infuses life and vitality in the body) is heated and activated by the subtle energy present inside the body, especially the one known as Madhyama (see verse no. 4 above), it transforms or metamorphoses into sounds revealed in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs during its movement inside and outside the body (as narrated in verse nos. 5-6 above)[1] (9).

[Note—[1]The sound is produced when the exhaled air vibrates the vocal cords in the throat. So a combination of factors come into play here—viz. the movement and speed of the air moving in the outwards direction through the mouth, the health and flexibility of the muscles of the throat and the vocal cords, the constriction that is created in order to make the air rub against the cords with the desired angle and force etc. The Pran wind is aided by the Apaan wind also as these sounds are produced in the mouth and not in the nose. It is to be noted here that the Madhyama Shakti has transformed itself as Baikhari Shakti in the mouth. Earlier the Pran Vayu was inhaled and exhaled through the nose when the mouth was shut and the man was silent during Pranayam. To speak, this same Pran Vayu changes its path and now it moves through the mouth, thereby activating this Baikhari Shakti latently present there but hitherto lying dormant. The Apaan wind is known to move down in the body, and hence it creates a sucking action of air in the mouth when it is opened to speak. This is like the filling on an iron-smith's bellows. The 'inhaled' breath is the Apaan wind which fires the oven present in the lower end of the body—i.e. the Mooladhar Chakra, to arouse its 'Pashyanti Shakti' (described in verse no. 3). The energy then leaps up and powers the dynamo of the heart—i.e. it activates the Hridaya Chakra and through it the 'Baikhari Shakti' (described in verse nos. 5-6). The latter produces 'sound'. The upward pressure exerted by the compressed winds in the body is the cause of the activation of this Shakti. Since air that is being expelled with force through the cavities of the mouth and the throat to produce a sound which is fine-tuned by the tongue into articulate words is located in the upper part of the body, this aspect of vital wind that is associated with speech is called Pran.

In short, that aspect of the Pran Vayu that is inhaled during the time the mouth is open while one speaks is called Apaan, and the Pran Vayu that is exhaled and which actually produces the sound is called Pran. The Apaan stokes the fire of life in the body from below like the fire present in the oven below the grate, while the Pran is the heated and activated wind that moves up in the oven and makes a hissing and rasping sound as it rushes up and out of the mouth of the oven. This is also why we cannot speak while drawing in air but only when it is expelled from the body—because the wind responsible for speech is Pran and not Apaan.

But it must be noted that both these two vital winds word in close cooperation with each other and do not oppose. No one can speak if there is no energy in the body to do so, and the Apaan wind is responsible for digestion of food in the intestines so that the

body is properly nourished and energized. Besides this point, the Pran wind would depend upon the Apaan wind to be honoured as the producer of vocal sound because it is the Apaan wind which heats up the body from below and helps to build up sufficient pressure on the lungs so that the air is expelled with enough force and pressure to produce sound when it ruffles or rubs against the vocal cords in the throat.

In a similar vein, the Pran wind keeps the body alive and active because no one can live for a second if the breathing stops, and the dead body would have no use for the Apaan wind located in the intestines and the lower part of the body. Thus we observe that body these two winds play hand-in-hand and are like the two wheels of the chariot to make life meaningful and livable for the man.]"

(17) (v) The *three methods to control the Pran* has been described in Yog Kundalini Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 2. To quote this Upanishad—"There are three methods for obtaining control over the Pran, i.e. doing Pranayam or breath control exercises of Yoga successfully—(a) Mitaahaar (control over what is eaten by eating moderately and correctly), (b) Aasan (various sitting postures of Yoga), and (c) Shakti Chaalan (activating the subtle energy centers in the body, such as the activation of the Kundalini, and making them upwardly mobile along with the vital winds of the body, especially the Apaan wind) (2).

(17) (w) The *Pran and Agni are synonymous with each other*—This fact has been affirmed in Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 3-4 which describes how the fire is kept alive inside the body of the sleeping man to indicate the presence of Pran in it.

(18) Kalaa—The word Kalaa has a vide application and briefly it refers to the a particular aspect or position or condition or situation of any entity. It is indicative of this entity's deeds which has led it into the present position or situation. It also refers to the special qualities, attributes, virtues, strengths, powers and potential possessed by it. other connotations include—(a) shape, form, contours of a thing; (b) special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one possesses; (c) a division, portion, fraction, phase or degree; (d) any kind of discharge; (e) brilliance, magnificence and grandeur; (f) fraud, deceit, pretensions and trick; (g) maverick and supernatural powers.

Now, let us look into these various connotations and contexts in which the word Kalaa is applied in practice.

References—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, Brahman 5, verse nos. 14-15, Chandogya Upanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 6, section 7, Prashna Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 1-6 of Atharva Veda, Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 18-19, and Kalisantarna Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 2.

(a) The 16 Kalaas of a man—In the context of the man, the word Kalaa represents the special qualities, art, craft, skills, expertise, attributes etc. that one must possess if he were to successfully reach his target in life. These different qualities and virtues present in a man

symbolically make him perfect; they represent his various strengths and potentials, and they are said to be sixteen in number corresponding to and symbolised by the sixteen phases of the moon. Since a man is an exact replica of the 'Viraat Purush', who in turn is a subtle manifestation of the sublime Brahm, these sixteen qualities or attributes of a man refer to the sixteen qualities of Brahm himself that made him the Lord of creation. The presence of all these divine attributes makes a man complete and very powerful. Hence, these sixteen Kalaas represent all the magnificent good qualities that are present in this creation which enable a man to overcome all adversities, hurdles and ill circumstances. Since Brahm is the creature's only sincere well wisher and succour in times of distress and dismay, and since Brahm possesses all the exemplary qualities grouped under the single word Kalaa, a man who is blessed with them is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm. Or in other words, he personifies Brahm with all his dignified virtues that are needed by a man to complete and get across the cycle of birth and death without hurdles.

These sixteen Kalaas of creation that are present in a man refer to the sixteen elements or primary components that form the basis of a man's very existence and his nature and temperament. These are the fundamental building blocks of his subtle and gross body, its characteristic qualities as well as the world surrounding him and how the man lives in and interacts with it.

The sixteen Kalaas or aspects or facets of creation have been expressly listed in the *Prashna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 4. These sixteen Kalaas are the following—(i) Pran (प्राण—life; life consciousness; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life manifested in the form of the vital winds; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (ii) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—the eclectic virtues of faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः—austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self; the sufferance for some auspicious and noble cause) (xiii) Mantra (मंत्रा—the key or formula to achieve success in any enterprise; it also refers to the ability to give good advise; the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, and then logically arrive at a conclusion; the different mystical formulas consisting of letters or words or phrases which encapsulated various dynamic forces of Nature which could be invoked and harnessed by the creature and help him to utilise the latent cosmic energy, strength and other magnificent powers incorporated in these Mantras for the benefit of creation at large), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—the ability

to do deeds and take action; the strength, energy and stamina to perform even difficult tasks), (xv) Loka (लोक—the various worlds, such as the mortal world where the creature lived on the earth, the lower heaven called the Antariksha where the junior Gods and the Spirits of dead creatures would live, and the upper heaven or Brahm Loka where the Supreme Being lives; the different worlds as experienced during the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleep states of existence of the consciousness), and (xvi) Naam (नाम— the name assigned to each independent creature; the good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory that a creature has in this world).

When we refer to the man, the Sanskrit word for him is Purush. Now, this word Purush refers to someone who resides in a 'Pur'—a city. [Refer—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165; Canto 5, verse no. 2. (b) Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 3.] In the Upanishads, this city is the human body, and the resident is the 'Atma' which is the all-pervading and cosmic Consciousness called the supreme Brahm residing inside the individual body of the creature as his 'true self', as his true identity. [Refer—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 5, verse no. 18.]

Now, this man who is being addressed as the 'Purush' is no ordinary human. In order to be rightly called a Purush he must have become pure and cleansed of all sins and evils. [Refer—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahman 4, verse no. 1.] Therefore, the 'Purush' is the Supreme Being (Brahm) residing in the body of the individual creature as his pure conscious Atma, the entity that is free from all contaminations, corruptions and blemishes. So, in the enlightened view of the Upanishads, the Purush when referred to the 'man' is not his physical body but the Atma.

These sixteen elements or units created by the Purush are the sixteen Kalaas or aspects or fractions of creation. In other words, this visible creation is made up of these sixteen units in different ratios just like a colourful picture in mosaic is prepared by an expert artisan from bits and pieces of glass or stone which are independent units in their own right but when incorporated in the mosaic that forms the colourful picture they become an inseparable and an integral part of the latter. Even if one piece is removed, the picture is disturbed.

In simple terms it means that a person's total composite personality, his characteristic attributes and individuality, his vitality and stamina, his prowess, powers and strength, his drive and vigour et al can be divided into sixteen parts.

The *Kalisantarna Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 says that these sixteen Kalaas are like sheaths or veils covering the Atma or 'self' of the man, and he can realise this glorious divinity residing in his bosom only when these Kalaas which are like impediments or hurdles in self and Brahm realisation are removed. When this Upanishad describes them as 'hurdles or impediments' in realising the glory of the 'self' it implies that although all these sixteen qualities are related to achieving glory and majesty in the world, they have nothing to do with 'self-realisation' and 'Brahm-realisation' which is possible only by abandoning everything related to this world as well as the body both in its gross part and its subtle part.

The *Prashna Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 2 says that the divine entity that exhibits sixteen divine attributes lives in the body itself.

The *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, Canto 1, Brahman 5, verse nos. 14-15 describes the sixteen Kalaas of Prajapti (the Lord of creation/world) in a symbolic manner by alluding to the phases of the moon. The fifteen nights of the dark or the bright phases of the moon when the disc of the moon continuously changes + one fundamental truth of the moon which is its disc that never changes inspite of its view from the earth that constantly changes.

(b) The *8 Kalaas of a man*—The eight Kalaa of a man are the eight characteristic features by which all men are classified in this world. All men are classified into one or the other type depending on one or more of these eight attributes. These eight apparent criterions used for classification of all humans are the following—his name, caste, complexion, birth or family, race, nationality, Ashram (one of the four phases in life, such as Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyas), and Varna (class of society such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Nishad or Chandal). [Ref. *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad*, verse no. 25 of Krishna Yajur Veda.]

(c) The *8 Kalaas of the Gods*—The eight Kalaas of the Gods and their incarnations or manifestations—Since there are said to be a total of sixteen Kalaas and the ordinary man can possess the maximum of these five Kalaas with those who are especially gifted having an additional three as narrated above (bringing the total Kalaas possessed by human beings to 5 + 3 = 8), the remaining eight (16 – 8) belong to the Gods or their incarnations or manifestations. These are the following—(i) Prabhvi—this is that magical and divine power possessed by the entity that enables it to make possible things that are impossible. For example we have the manifestation of Lord Narsingh (half man and half lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu from a stone pillar to protect his devotee Prahalad from being killed by his own demon father). (ii) Kunthini—this enables the entity to neutralise the any of the effects of the five elements of creation, including their bad effects. For example we have Lord Shiva who drunk the horrible poison called Halaahal that emerged as a result of the churning of the ocean without letting that corroding and very potent poison from harming him. (iii) Vikaasani Kalaa—the ability to develop, grow, expand or increase to any size, in any form and in any way one wishes. For example we have Lord Vamaan, the dwarf mendicant, who had measured the entire world in his three steps. (iv) Maryaadini—this is the character, attribute or quality which forces the God-head to observe and exhibit exemplary virtues of righteousness, probity and propriety inspite of his ability of doing anything it wants. It virtually ties him down or restricts him to following a strict and exemplary code of conduct that he successfully implements; these codes are difficult even for the Gods to implement. For example we have Lord Ram who led an exemplary life of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety as well as observe all the character traits and attributes that are so common with all the human beings inspite of the fact that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the almighty, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and all-incorporating Viraat Purush who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. (v) Sanghlaadini Kalaa—this enables the God-head to supersede or overrule the laws of Nature and perform

miracles that even defy its laws. For example, Lord Krishna had created flowers and fruits even without season. (vi) Ahalaadini Kalaa—this enables one to physically remain away but spiritually be constantly near one's object of devotion or contemplation and serve him or her. This is the way Radha was able to enchant Lord Krishna inspite of not remaining with him at all times. (vii) Paripurna—this word itself implies something that is wholesome and complete in all respects. It can therefore exhibit all the sixteen qualities or Kalaas in one go, or is the entity that embodies all these qualities in its self. Amongst the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Ram and Krishna are said to be Paripurna. The supreme Brahm is 'Paripurna' because nothing is missing from him; it is wholesome and complete. And finally, (viii) Swarupaa-wasthiti—this means the ability to withdraw or collect all the Kalaas exhibited by an entity and revert to its original and primary form when it is so wished by it. For example, at the end of the Dwapar Yuga, Lord Krishna had withdrawn all his Kalaas into himself before bringing to close his sojourn on this earth.

(d) The *5 Kalaas of a man*—From the metaphysical point of view, the five Kalaas in a man are the following sheaths that surround his Atma or pure consciousness—the Anna Maye Kosh or the food sheath, the Pran Maye Kosh or the vital wind or air sheath, the Mano Maye Kosh or the mental sheath, the Vigyan Maye Kosh or the intellect sheath, and the Anand Maye Kosh or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma and determine the Atma's temperament, nature, inclinations and behavioural patterns in this world.

The *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 21-26 describe these five Koshas or Kalaas of the Atma in detail. The Atma is given a name according to the sheath in which it is reflected—such as the Anna Maye Atma pertaining to the Anna Maye Kosh (verse no. 21), the Pran Maye Atma pertaining to the Pran Maye Kosh and the Mano Maye Atma pertaining to the Mano Maye Kosh (verse no. 22), the Vigyan Maye Atma pertaining to the Vigyan Maye Kosh and the Anand Maye Atma pertaining to the Anand Maye Kosh (verse no. 23). Verse nos. 24-26 describe how these five sheaths appear as consequetive layers surrounding the central core called the Atma.

(e) The *5 Kalaas of Pran*—There is another connotation of the phrase five Kalaas of a man in the context of the word Pran. Hence, there are five Kalaas of the Pran. The Pran is the vital wind or air element that sustains life in a man. The chief form of this air element that sustains life in the body is called 'Pran', and the term is usually applied to the breath. But besides this, there are four other types of main Prans such as Apaan, Samaan, Udaan and Vyan. These are the names given to the vital wind in order to distinguish between the various functions or roles that it performs inside the body in order to study this air or wind element in a comprehensive way just like we classify any given subject into various streams to facilitate study and analysis. Therefore, hypothetically, the Pran is divided into five main Kalaas. Thus, there is the main Pran and its four Kalaas as follows—(i) The 'Pran' is the wind element which, as breath, is exhaled as well as inhaled and is responsible for infusing and sustaining life in the body; it is considered the chief wind in the whole setup because without life no other wind would be of any significance to the creature. (ii) The 'Apaan' is the wind that passes down the

intestines and is responsible for digestion of the food taken by the creature and its excretion through the anus and urinary organs (kidneys). (iii) The 'Samaan' is the wind that is responsible for equal distribution of nourishment throughout the body, as well as in circulation of blood. (iv) The 'Udaan' is the wind that helps the body to rise and move about, it also helps the body to expel toxic waste gases in the body through the nostrils and mouth in the form of exhalation and cough. (v) And finally the 'Vyan' is the wind that helps in maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and it also controls the functioning of the other winds.

(f) The *5 Kalaas as revealed in the five categories of Jivas* or living beings—The concept of the five Kalaas can be understood in another way in the context of various forms that the Atma or pure consciousness takes in this world. All living beings are called Jivas. They are of five primary categories of Jivas. The basic life forms have one or two Kalaas to start with, and then it progresses to the level of humans and Gods having five and more Kalaas. All the Jivas (living beings) in the world have been classified into five basic categories and their respective Kalaas are as follows—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa called Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaraayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. (v) The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the Spirit or the Soul.

(g) *The 3 Kalaas of a man*—Besides the above, some humans are said to possess three other special qualities which make certain people very unique and different from others.

These are the following:—(i) Atishyaani Kalaa—this enables a person to successfully accomplish certain tasks very quickly and in a very short period of time which would be unthinkable to be completed even in the entire lifetime by an ordinary man. Such people are born prodigies and are said to be gifted with certain eclectic qualities and characters that are not normal. For example, the Adi Shankacharya, the great philosopher and exponent of Advaita Vedanta and the person who had written matchless and unbeatable commentaries on the principle Upanishads besides establishing the four great pilgrim sites in the four corners of India, had completed in a young age of just ten-twelve years what would take an entire life to do. (ii) Viprinaamini Kalaa—this entitles the man to acquire the eight mystical powers called the Siddhis (such as Anima, Garima, Mahima, Laghima, Praapti, Praakramye, Ishwatwa and Vashistha) and show magical powers to become small or big, light or heavy, or even enter the body of another person or assume any shape or form he wants. (iii) Sankaamini Kalaa—this enables a person to transfer and install his own stupendous divine and mystical powers in another person and the second person can perform deeds that he would not be able to do himself and is even stunned at his own achievements. We have the example of this in Swami Vivekanand in whom his Guru revered Ramkrishna had established some divine spark which enabled the great swami to leave an indelible mark on the pages of history and religion by his landmark achievements and conquering the world by his speeches in America where he established the foundation of Vedanta.

(i) The *16 Kalaas of the Moon*—This refers to each of the sixteenth part of the moon's diameter/disc, or one of the various phases of the moon. The moon waxes and wanes in a fourteen day phase—each day it is different from the other. Thus we have fourteen Kalaas of the moon. Added to this is the full moon and the dark moon—i.e. two more Kalaas. Therefore the total Kalaas of the moon are 14 + 2 = 16. These fourteen Kalaas have the following names—Amritaa, Maanadaa, Pushaa, Tushti, Pushti, Rati, Dhriti, Shashini, Chandrika, Kanti, Jyotsnaa, Sri, Pritirangaa, Purnaa and Swarajaa.

That is why lord Krishna is said to belong to the Moon race because he possessed sixteen Kalaas. The symbolism is very stark.

(j) The *12 Kalaas of the Sun*—This refers to each of the twelfth part in which the sun's diameter/disc has been divided. They are called 'Dwaadash Aditya', meaning the twelve forms in which the Sun God is known. They are the following—Tapini, Taapini, Dhumraa, Jwaalini, Ruchi, Shushumna, Bhogadaa, Vishwaa, Bodhini, Dhaarini and Kshamaa.

That is why lord Ram was said to belong to the Solar race because he had twelve Kalaas possessed by the Sun. There is an obvious parallel here.

(k) *Other forms of Kalaas*—Other connotations of the word are the following:— (i) the division of time equivalent to about eight seconds; (ii) one degree out of the three hundred and sixty degrees. So when this term 'Kalaa' is applied to that supreme Truth, also known as the supreme Brahm which is complete and wholesome, it implies that what is being referred to is but only one or more fraction of the whole, and therefore this one or more fraction cannot be a complete definition of the whole. At the best, it can give a rough idea of the principal, but not the exact idea of what constitue Brahm. This Brahm is an entity so wholesome and grand, so

majestic, so magnificent, so stupendous and astounding that it transcends the definitions or parameters set by this particular word. That Truth or Brahm is beyond their reach and dimension; these various connotations of the word cannot either be applied to that Truth or Brahm nor can they define it in its entirety in any way.

(l) The *64 Kalaas of Brahm*—It is said that the complete Brahm has sixty four Kalaas. If these are divided into four quarters or quadrants or aspects or symbolic legs of Brahm, three-fourths is in the realm of the unknown (heaven) and only one-fourth is in the form of the visible creation (world). Therefore, if Brahm is a complete cycle of sixty four Kalaas, then the known physical world has 64/4 = 16 Kalaas. It is a quadrant of Brahm. (Rig Veda, 10/90/4).

It is said that Brahm has four 'Paads' or legs which symbolise the four corners of creation. That is, Brahm surrounds this entire creation from all sides. Out of these four legs, the visible world represents one. The rest of the creation stands for the remaining three legs. According to another theory, Brahm is said to have sixty four Kalaas or aspects or levels. Out of these, the known world is represents Brahm's sixteen Kalaas, i.e. this world is only one fourth aspect of the entire Brahm—a fact metaphorically depicted by saying that Brahm can measure this world in one step. The rest is the invisible macrocosmic aspect of Brahm which is beyond imagination and comprehension. This is obvious because if one fourth is so difficult to understand, one can easily understand the astounding nature and stupendity of the remaining three fourths.

(m) The *Kalaa in the context of OM*—In the geometrical symbol of Brahm which is pronounced as 'OM', these three Naad, Bindu and Kalaa appear as a crescent moon or a shallow bowl with a dot at the center placed on the top of the symbol for OM. This Naad is like a big trough and represents the cosmic bowl or crucible in which the primary cosmic gel was placed to initiate the process of creation. The Bindu appears to indicate the pin-point source of heat, radiation or any other activating source placed just above this crucible to inject sufficient energy in to the primary fluid and activate it. It acts like a source of energy directed at the crucible (Naad) set off the chain reaction that would ultimately culminate in the creation. The Kalaa which refers to the various phases of the moon would indicate the different stages through which the entire process passed from the initial stages of creation to its complete clousure. But even as the parents of a child do not undergo any apparent change while the embryo develops in the mother's womb, the Supreme Being remained the same all the while the creation developed and unfolded in the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature. Another example to explain is the moon's disc which appears to change every single day but all know that it remains the same, and the apparent change in its shape is only due to the angle with which its lighted or dark surface is viewed from the earth.

(19) Tattwas—The Tattvas/Tattwas (essential elements)—The word Tattvas/Tattwas literally means the essence, the reality, the true state and the basic principle of anything. It also implies the principal elements of creation. The Tattvas/Tattwas are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not

only as its brickwork but also to decide its exterior façade and interior character. We have primary elements that were formed at the time of creation, and the secondary elements that developed later on as the creation evolved, and finally there were the tertiary elements which were the offshoots to the process of creation when the complexities of the latter increased.

The word Tattva/Tattwa has many connotations as follows—(i) the true, essential and primary or fundamental aspect of anything; (ii) the elementary reality; (iii) the true or real state; (iv) the primary Prakriti-Nature; (v) the truthful nature of the Atma or soul of individual creature at the micro level as well as that at the macro level of the Atma which is universal, all-pervading, omnipresent, transcendental and almighty Soul of the entire creation; (vi) the 'Mana' consisting of the mind and the heart complex; (vii) the Sun; (viii) the universal, eternal elements that form the basic building blocks of the entire creation; (ix) elementary form in which the entire creation exists.

A word may have different connotations according to the context in which it is used. For example, we speak of a flower's Tattva, i.e. the volatile liquid extracted from the flowers and used as various scents and perfumes. It is called the 'essence' of the flower. Even the nectar is called 'essence' or Tattva of the flower. The oil extracted from seeds and herbs are also called their Tattva or essential extracts. The common factor in all these is the 'liquid or fluid' nature of the Tattva. It is this reason why life is said to have emerged in water, a fluid and elixir of life and vitality, the 'essence' or Tattva that sustains and protects life. The primary essence of creation was not some liquid as we understand the term; it was 'ethereal', more like the air or wind element, resembling more closely to the something that fills the outer space above the surface of the earth. It must be understood that though 'air' does not exist outside the atmosphere of the earth, it is not an absolute vacuum, for there is something that lies between any two celestial bodies or planets, separating them and preventing them from colliding with each other. All celestial bodies are dipped in this cosmic liquid which is like a 'volatile essence' drawn from flowers. It is 'volatile' because it is never the same, and that is why we say that the creation is continuously and perpetually changing and evolving. Had it not been so, had that Tattva been a solid, everything in creation would have been cast in one fixed mould for eternity.

According to the philosophy of Tantra Shastra dedicated to the worship of divinity in the form of Shiva and Shakti, the process of creation took the following initial steps. Before anything came into being, Brahm, the supreme consciousness and the ultimate truth of creation, known as Shiva, was established in his own radiant effulgence or self-illumination symbolising his splendorous glory, majesty and divinity. Hence he was called 'Prakash', literally meaning light. When he decided to deliberate and actually started the process of deliberation in order to start the process of creation, there was a subtle 'spandan' or a slight throb or imperceptible movement which transformed into a vibration. The waves generated by this initial vibration developed in the cosmic ether and gradually coalesced with each other to give rise to higher waves of higher amplitudes. This produced the cosmic sound called the Naad. Since the creation

was conceived in the bowl of the cosmic ether, the energy of the initial sound was focused at a central point, called the focal point or the dot or 'Bindu'. This Bindu contained the combined powers of both the male Shiva and the female Shakti like a dicotyledonous seed which produced the two separate entities called Shiva and Shakti. The union of these two resulted in the unfolding of the rest of the creation. Thus it will be observed that whatever exists in this creation can be traced back to this primeval Naad. Hence, the latter is called 'Shabda Brahm', or the Brahm as sound. Therefore it is very natural to assume that all Mantras dedicated to any divine entity and consisting of the sound element (because Mantra consist of letters and words, and are chanted or repeated to make them effective) has its origin in this Shabda Brahm and gets its powers and energy from this Shabda Brahm. In other words, the Manta contains in itself the essential meaning, form and spirit of the deity whose Mantra it is and which is being worshipped and invoked. Constant repetition of the Mantra generates so much energy in due course of time that the deity being worshipped is revealed. This is because the sound has great powers and energy as is evident when reverberation of sound waves and the resonance created by them are so powerful and forceful that they can shatter sheet glass in windows when an explosion occurs near a building.

Primarily there were five basic elements or Tattvas of creation—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements—they are the various Tattvas of creation. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. Finally came the tertiary elements—they are the various Anatahakarans, the various Vikaars and Vrittis, the three Gunas etc. that would form the third layer of elements or Tattvas of creation.

These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma which in association of different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different nature, temperaments, character and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements but releasing energy or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. The Atma would be more like the atom of the carbon atom which is at the heart of all organic compounds.

Now let us see what the Upanishads have to say on this metaphysical concept.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 10 describes the basic Tattvas from which the creation came into existence as follows—"In the beginning, that principle primary and primordial 'essence' or Tattva was absolutely placid and calm.

Then there were minute and almost imperceptible ripples in it just like the ones in water, indicating some subtle and secret activity. This caused the element of Ahankar (the sense of pride and ego) to emerge in it.

This activity resulted in the formation of the primary cosmic egg which had certain Gunas (inherent qualities, attributes, virtues and characteristics) that would determine the specific nature, temperament and personality traits of the creature that would finally emerge from this egg when it hatched. [There are three Gunas such as the Sata, Raja and Tama. They are like the chemical ingredients in any fluid that determine its fundamental qualities and characteristics. These Gunas would ultimately determine the underlying subtle and basic nature, the basic temperament and character traits of the offspring, i.e. the creature, which would emerge when the egg hatched finally upon maturity.]

Besides the above, the yolk of the egg had as its basic constituent ingredients the five primary elements called 'Panch Maha Bhuts' (which are sky, air, fire, water and earth). These elements determined the basic texture of this yolk that would determine the form which the offspring (creature) would get when the egg finally hatched (10)."

The 1-8 Tattwas—The Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Uttar Kanda/ Canto 2, verse nos. 19-20 says that there is only one Tattwa in creation, and it is the Absolute Truth. This Tattwa is like the 'light' that illuminates the entire creation by eliminating the darkness representing spititual delusions and ignorance. To quote—" From the basic or fundamental perspective of the Absolute Truth of creation, such debates are useless and a waste of time and energy. Actually, it is one Truth that is the fundamental Tattwa (essence, basis) of everything in existence.

[Here, 'Truth' refers to the Consciousness that pervades in this creation uniformly, and without which nothing would matter or exist. If there was no Consciousness, there would have been no life on Earth, and the world (earth) would be as barren a stretch of terrain as that on the planets Mars or Venus for instance!]

Whatever is visible in this physical world also appears to be 'true' because it is perceived first hand, but this 'truth' is cloaked in Maya as the instruments of the body which perceive it are themselves veiled in Maya. [Refer verse no. 9-18.]

Therefore, there is a sea of difference between the 'Truth' that is 'absolute', and the 'truth' that is 'not absolute' but is rather deluding.

The 'Absolute Truth' is a manifestation of or a metaphor for 'light' because it is self-evident and self-illuminated.

[It is different from the perceived or imagined 'truth' in the form of the world which is illuminated by the light of something else, for instance the light of the Sun. The Sun is self-illuminated and self-sustaining; it does not require anything else to make it shine and give light,

or remain burning eternally. On the other hand the world is neither self-illuminated nor self-sustaining—i.e. it is not self-illuminated as it depends upon the light of the Sun to remain illuminated, and it is not self-sustaining as it depends upon the Sun for its heat, light and energy, factors that are absolute essentials for creation to survive.

Similarly, the Atma is self-illuminated and self-sustaining, whereas the body is dependent upon this Atma for its awareness of the world ('illumination') as well as its life ('sustenance')]

But, at the same time, the fact is that it is the 'light' that makes the Truth shine, whether at the cosmic level of the 'absolute' or the mundane level of the world which the creature sees with his organs of perception. This 'light' is the 'Consciousness' known as Brahm at the cosmic level, and the Atma at the individual level of the creature.

Hence, the 'light' (of knowledge) is a common denominator at all levels of existence that illuminates the Truth. That is, it is knowledge, wisdom and erudition that highlight the 'truth' by eliminating darkness in the form of ignorance of this 'truth' resulting in delusions arising out of misinterpretation, misconception, misperception, misinformation etc.

This 'light' representing the glorious virtue of knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and sagacity that are the unique characteristics of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm at the micro plane of existence, and as the Atma at the individual level of the creature's existence is therefore a non-dual or Advaita virtue. It is uniform and universal in creation (because the virtues of knowledge and wisdom that stand for 'truth', instead of the ever-changing nature of 'un-truth', always remain steady, unchanging and one—or 'non-dual')

[If we regard the word 'light' as a metaphor for the enlightened Atma, then also the same logic applies, as the 'truthful Atma' is a universal, immutable, immanent and constant factor of creation, an unchallengeable factor without which this creation would lose its meaning and foundation.] (19-20)."

According to *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 6, verse no. 3, of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, the wheel of creation set in motion by Brahm is called Karma Chakra. This verse states that for this purpose, the supreme creator progressively used the elements from their subtlest form to their grossest form. Though the names of these elements are not specifically mentioned in the text, scholars such as Shankaracharya and Shankarananda have explained then in their commentaries. Based on their interpretations, we shall see what this verse says in detail—"That supreme creator (Brahm) did the 'deed' of creating this Brahm-Chakra and then set it in motion. He watched it move, and then created a circumstance whereby the subtle conjoined the gross to result in the unfolding of this vast world. [That is why this world consists of two types of attributes or qualities—one which come under the category of subtle, and the other that come under the category of gross.]

In other words, the supreme creator first revealed his own characteristic 'Self' in the form of the pure consciousness called the cosmic Atma which was very subtle. Then he went on progressively making it grosser and grosser by slow degrees, in a step-by-step method. Thus he created the many elements. Then he mixed them in various permutations and combinations to produce newer, more varied, and extremely fascinating array of products

which become heavier by degrees and then finally resulted in the structure which we call 'creation' and which is still evolving.

Therefore, it all started from one element (Avidya—lack of truthfulness, substance and pith in what is being created, as all the creation that was created as a result of this endeavour of the creator was a mirage and not the reality), and this was followed by a chain reaction, progressively producing two elements (Dharma—righteousness, probity and propriety + Adharma—the opposite of Dharma), three elements (the three basic qualities of Sata—the high moral quality of spiritualism + Raja—the mediocre quality of worldly passions etc. + Tama—the meanest quality of sinfulness), four elements (Prakriti—nature + Mana—mind + Buddhi—intellect + and Ahankar—pride and vanity), five elements (the five Prans which are the vital winds—Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan; it also refers to the five sense perceptions—sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling), six elements (the five perceptions + Mana or mind, because it is the mind that brings effectively coordinates these five perceptions), seven elements (five perceptions + Mana or mind + Buddhi or intelligence), and eight elements (the five basic elements—sky, air, fire, water and earth + Mana or mind + Buddhi or intellect + Ahankar or pride and vanity).

The supreme creator mixed his own divine and eclectic qualities with the gross characteristics of Kaal (time, age, period and circumstance) and the subtle qualities of the inner self (such as having compassion, mercy, benevolence and magnanimity as well as desires, wishes, aspirations, hopes and expectations) to create this world. [That is why this world exhibits these basic characters because they all have been incorporated in its structure by the creator.]

The entire gross creation came into being out of this concoction.

Since this wheel came into being as a result of some deed done by this supreme creator, it was also called the 'Karma Chakra'[1]. The creator, having thus created this wheel out of the subtlest of elements and the grossest of elements, watched fascinatingly as it rotated (3).

[Note—[1]The cycle of deeds, their consequences, and newer deeds and their fresh consequences is called the Karma Chakra or the 'Wheel of Deeds'. This cycle is referred to as a 'wheel' because it rotates around the central axle consisting of the notion of 'deed' done by the creature, and therefore this wheel has its existence only till the time the creature 'does the deeds'. As soon as the creature stops doing any deed, the wheel is dismantled because the axle breaks. But this ideal scenario is always not possible as a creature has to do one or the other deed when he lives in this world, and he cannot escape the consequences of these deeds done by him, which in turn make him do other deeds as a follow up action, and these new deeds set in motion their own set of consequences, and so the wheel goes on rotating on and on. In other words, the creature gets shackled to the wheel of deeds just like the bull or the ox that turns the water-wheel for its master throughout its life but cannot get done with it. The bull or ox dies turning the water-wheel but even after its death the wheel goes on turning, albeit some other unfortunate animals is yoked to it.

Now, the question is 'how to stop this Wheel of Deeds even while living in this world'? The answer lies in the truthful knowledge of the self, which is the Atma, and the fact that it is the true self of the creature and that it is very distinct and independent from the body which is the entity that actually and physically does the deed. Once this delineation becomes obvious—and this is only possible by studying the Upanishads and intelligently understanding their fundamental tenets and doctrines in the correct perspective—the creature endeavours to distance himself from the deeds done by the body. This attitude removes the basic cause of all the problems, and leads to the breaking of the vicious cycle known as Karma Chakra, there by setting the creature free from his bondage."

The 4 Tattwas—The Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 5 mentions four Tattwas which are honoured during the formal process of worshipping of Lord Ram using his Pooja Yantra, called the Bhupur Yantra of Lord Ram. These four Tattwas are the following—(i) Maya Tattwa, i.e. the basic elements that characterize and define Maya, or the numerous delusions, misconceptions and entanglements that exist in this creation and are fostered by ignorance; (ii) Vidya Tattwa, i.e. the fundamental principles, basic doctrines and essential virtues of wisdom, knowledge, erudition, sagacity, learning and enlightenment etc. that can help one to overcome Maya and Agyan; (iii) Kalaa Tattwa, i.e. the essential qualities in all the living beings that determine their individual personality and character; also meaning the various art, skill, craft etc. that exist in creation, as well as the basic fact that the world is ever-changing and no two things or instances are alike; and (iv) Par Tattwa, i.e. the supreme, absolute, essential, constant and universal Truth and Reality that refers to Brahm, the universal Consciousness.

According to this Upanishad, these four Tattwas are worshipped as follows—" the following eight divine entities are worshipped in their personified form in a symbolic manner on the eight petals of the central 8-petalled lotus of the Bhupur Yantra.

First, the petals on the four angles or corners and their relevant deities are worshipped and honoured, followed by those in the four cardinal points or directions. The worshipping is done in a clockwise manner, starting first with the petals that point to the four corners or angles, followed by those petals that point to the four directions.

Thus, we have the following course of worship—

(A) Worship of the lotus petals in the four corners—(i) Atma or soul which is pure consciousness and the true 'self' of the worshipper is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the south-east corner; (ii) Antar-atma or the worshipper's inner-self and his sub-conscious is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the south-west corner; (iii) Parmatma or the supreme Soul of creation, also known as Supreme Being, is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the north-west corner; and (iv) Gyan-Atma or that aspect of the supreme Consciousness that is eternally wise and enlightened, which never comes under the influence of delusions and ignorance, honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the north-east corner[1].

(B) Worship of the lotus petals in the four directions—(i) The Maya-tattwa (माया तत्त्व) is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the eastern direction; (ii) the Vidya-tattwa (विद्या तत्त्व) is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the southern direction; (iii) the Kalaa-tattwa (कला तत्त्व) is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the western direction; and (iv) the Para-tattwa (पर तत्त्व) is honoured and worshipped on the lotus petal pointing towards the northern dirction[2] (5).

[Note—[1]Their respective Mantras are—(i) OM Atamane Namaha (ॐ आत्मने नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations to the Atma before which I bow most reverentially', (ii) OM Antaraatmane Namaha (ॐ अन्तरात्मे नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations to the Antar-atma before which I bow most reverentially', (iii) OM Parmaatmane Namaha (ॐ परमात्मने नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations to the Parmatma before whom I bow most reverentially', and (iv) OM Gyaanaatmaane Namaha (ॐ ज्ञानात्मने नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations to the Atma which is an embodiment of the virtues of Gyan—i.e. which is wise, enlightened, knowledgeable and learned. I bow most reverentially before it'.

[2]Their respective Mantras are—(i) OM Maya-tattwa Namaha (ॐ माया तत्त्व नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations! I bow before the fundamental delusions called Maya (that is created by Brahm)'; (ii) OM Vidya-tattwa Namaha (ॐ विद्या तत्त्व नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations! I bow before the grand virtues of wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment which are collectively called Vidya'; (iii) OM Kalaa-tattwa Namaha (ॐ कला तत्त्व नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations! I bow before the various skills, arts and crafts that exist in creation as well as the magical nature of this creation to change every moment'; and (iv) OM Par-tattwaaye Namaha (ॐ पर तत्त्वाय नमः) meaning 'OM Salutations! I bow before the supreme Tattwa or the great Principal and Authority of creation (which is the supreme transcendental Brahm)'. It is called 'Para Tattwa' as it transcends all known definitions and criterions, and is beyond comprehension and grasp of knowledge; it is the epicenter and progenitor of all essential Tattwas in creation.

As is the case with all the entities to which worship is being offered in this Yantra, the above eight are also honoured in a symbolic manner.]

The basic 5 Tattvas—The five basic elements or Tattvas are the following—the sky, air or wind, fire or energy, water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. [Refer Sharrirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 1-2.]

Generally speaking, the primary elements that constitue the building blocks of creation are called the 'Panch Maha Bhuts' or the five basic elements. They are sky/space, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth in ascending order of grossness. These principal forces of Nature are responsible for coming into being, sustenance, development and conclusion of the entire creation as we know it. Their personified forms are imagined to be in the form of their patron Gods who actually control these elements and their functions in creation. These Gods have been described in Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 72 of Sam Veda tradition, Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 8 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, and Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 83-102 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178, and Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15 describe the patron Gods, shape and colour of these five elements.

How to do meditation by contemplating upon these five elements have been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 49-51.

According to Paingal Upanishad, Canto 2, and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are five basic or primary elements in creation, and the rest of the creation has evolved from them.

How the five basic elements were used to create this world has been described in Shukla Yajur Veda tradition's Paingalo-panishad, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-8; and Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, and Canto 2, verse no. 1-12.

The location of these five elements in the body of the creature have been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 5, and Canto 2, verse no. 135-141; Paingalo-panishad, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-8.

The functions of these five elements as well as the creation of the five sense perceptions, called the Tanmatras (perceptions of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch), have been described in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 6; and Paingalo-panishad, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2-4.

The location, colours and Beej Mantras of the five elements have been described in Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 85-102. It goes on to describe how meditation is to be done on these five elements.

How the body of the creature is formed by the five elements have been described in Shaarirako Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 69 elucidates the fact that Yoga brings about a union between the various elements or Dhaatus of the body.

The activities and pyramidal structure of the five elements have been described in Shaarirako Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 6.

During formal forms of ritualistic worship, such as when worshipping a Pooja Yantra or worship instrument dedicated to some deity (such as the one dedicated to Lord Ram as described in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Cantos 4-5), or doing fire sacrifices, it is necessary to perform Bhut Shuddhi or purification of the elements.

The process of Bhut Shuddhi is of paramount importance during worship rituals. Now let us see what it means in metaphysical terms. It is referred to in the Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse no. 1.

The Bhut Suddhi is the formal purification of the five Bhuts (the fundamental elements in creation). It essentially consists of imagining that the body consists of the five basic elements, viz. earth, water, fire/energy, air/wind, and space/sky, and then first merging them all, one by one, into one single entity, and finally into super consciousness which is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This process purifies the body as it does away with its grossness and tranforms it into an entity that assumes subtlety associated with the pure consciousness.

The process is as follows—(a) Imagine that the body from the toe to the knees consist of the 'earth element', is square in shape, has the mark of the Vajra (goad), and is yellow in colour. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'lum/n(g)' (लं). (b) The part of the body from the knees to the navel consist of the 'water' element, is shaped like a crescent moon, has the mark of the lotus, and is white coloured. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'wum/n(g)' (वं). (c) The part of the body from the navel till the throat (Adam's apple) consists of the 'fire' element which is triangular in shape, has the sign of 'Swastika' (ॐ), and is red coloured. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'rum/n(g)' (रं). (e) The part of the body from the throat till the root of the nose and the middle of the eyebrows consists of the 'wind' element, is hexagonal in shape, dark in colour, and has 6 dots outlining the six points of the hexagon. It is marked by the seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'yum/n(g)' (यं). (f) The part of the body from the root of the nose to the centre of the skull is the 'space/sky' element, is circular in shape, its colour is grey like smoke/fog, and it is marked by a flag/standard. The seed/root syllable or Beej Mantra 'hum/n(g)' (हं) is marked in it.

All these five elements should be merged with one another in a sequential form, beginning from the earth at the bottom of the body and going right upto the cranium where the sky element is located. In other words, the earth is made to submerge its self into the water element, the water into the fire element, the fire into the wind element, the wind into the sky or space element, and finally the sky/space element is freed from its confinement inside the skull to assume its original form as the vast, infinite, measureless and endless cosmos called the Prakriti or Nature in its macrocosmic dimensions. This Nature is without any specifice attributes and is all-pervading and all-encompassing.

This Prakriti is also known as Maya which is the delusion-creating powers of Brahm, the supreme Consciousness. So, in the final step of purification, it is obligatory to remove this Maya altogether as it is the primary cause of the erroneous notion that the pure consciousness that is the true 'self of all living beings is the gross body consisting of elements of varying degrees of grossness, and that this body lives in a world which also consists of elements in varying degrees of grossness. Therefore, truthful cleansing would be a thorough rinsing of the innerself so that all forms of delusions and misconception are removed.

When both the Maya (delusions and their attendant miconceptions and hallucinations) and the Prakriti (a person's natural habits, inclinations and temperaments) are eliminated, the worshipper is freed from all of their tainting affects. This results in his ability to relate himself with his truthful and immaculate form as the 'pure consciousness' rather than the gross body as well as the gross world consisting of the five elements in their varying degrees of grossness. In other words, the 'self' of the individual merges with the 'cosmic Self' or the cosmic Consciousness of creation known as Brahm. This is complete cleansing of the worshipper as it is only possible when all Maya and its negative affects are done away with. Mere physical washing of the gross body by taking ritualistic baths in rivers that are visibly polluted or by any other means can never truly clean the soul sufficiently enough so that it is prepared to receive the guest-of-honour in the form of Brahm, the Supreme Being!

In this way, the seeker/aspirant/worshipper should meditate for some time and imagine that he has merged himself, i.e. his Atma or soul, with the supreme Soul called the Parmatma so as to become inseparable from the latter. This Parmatma is no one but the cosmic Consiousness known as the supreme Brahm.

Then, after recovering from deep concentration and meditative trance, he should imagine that his body is being recreated from that supreme Brahm by following the reverse sequence of events. This newly created body will have been purged in a symbolic way of all the sins and faults which were present in the worshipper's earlier body. Theoretically, it is like taking a new birth with a detoxified and purified body. The worshipper becomes a different person from his earlier self, and he then becomes eligible to worship Lord Ram using the divine Ram Yantra. The reverse sequence of events is as follows—the supreme soul—the world/Maya—space/sky—wind/fire—water—earth. Hence, the body has been purged and catheterised of all earlier impurities, and has now become worthy to worship the Lord who is immaculate, holy and divine.

The all-pervading, omniscient, omnipotent, attributeless, almighty, all-encompassing and auspicious supreme Soul is present as the seeker's or worshipper's Atma in his own body. This process is deemed to be the best way for the symbolic purification of body that is needed to offer worship to the Supreme Being who cannot be approached with a polluted and dirty self.

The importance to thoroughly cleanse oneself before approaching the Lord is simple to understand even in the modern context—can anyone ever imagine that he would present himself in the royal court of a king, or in the front of the president of a sovereign country while he is dirty, stinking, shabbily dressed and in a general unkempt condition?

Now we shall quote the selected Upanishads cited above vis-à-vis the five elements.

(i) The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 176-178, and Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15 describe the patron Gods, shape and colour of these five elements. Now let us see what these verses have to say—

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 176 = The Chaturastra Chakra is located at the site where the earth (representing the living creation and the visible world) has its beginning, and its patron deity is Lord Brahma, the creator[1].

After that is the Chakra shaped like a crescent moon, called the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra. Its patron deity is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. This Chakra is situated on the water element[2] (176).

[Note—[1]That is, this Chakra has four corners and it represents the earth which acts as the base for all living world as is known to us. The four corners are the four directions into which the earth is hypothetically divided for the purpose of study and helping the creature to decide his location. They are south, west, north and east.

[2]In other words, the water element is symbolically shaped like a shallow convex bowl or tray because the water assumes the shape of the vessel in which it is kept and it cannot be held in a completely flat surface. So the vessel that can hold water must be

slightly curved like the crescent moon.

The Dhyan Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 27-28 describe the subtle heart shaped like a divine Lotus as a Peeth where the supreme Lord known as Vishnu is honorably seated.]

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 177 = The Agni Chakra representing the fire element is triangular in shape and its patron deity is Lord Rudra (Shiva), the concluder of creation[1].

The Vayu Chakra representing the wind or air element is shaped like a hexagon and its patron deity is Ishwar, the Supreme Being[2] (177).

[Note—[1]The colour of fire is red or orange, and the sign depicting danger is a triangle. That is why road signs depicting danger are triangular is outline. Fire is the most dangerous of the natural elements; hence it is represented by the triangle.

[2]The severe cyclonic storms appearing during the rainy season are observed to move in rapid circular motions, changing directions unpredictably and frequently. The tornadoes or twisters and hot whirlwinds during summers also move in rapid circles that sweep across the land and change course unpredictably. This natural tendency of the wind to move in circles and change direction at will is represented by depiction of its basic shape as a hexagon—which is an-almost circular shape but having corners and straight lines to indicate that the wind has the inborn characteristic of moving in a particular direction for some time and then suddenly changing course and taking another direction. This is the reason why one feels the wind blowing sharply against one's face if one stands in the 'corner' of a large hallway. The movement of the air is more marked at sharp bends as compared to smooth turns.]

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 178 = The Akash Chakra representing the sky or space element is shaped like a circle and its patron deity is Sada-Shiva (the eternal truthful Brahm)[1] (178).

[Note—[1]The best shape that the forces of Nature allow in order to retain everything within the outer boundary of existence is a rounded ball, a sphere. Since the sky encloses everything in existence and prevents them from scattering about and getting lost in the wilderness of creation, it must have a spherical shape. This is the basic principle of physics that when any thing moves around any central attracting entity such as the planets moving around the sun, the path that they take is circular because of the natural gravitational pull of the sun. The circular shape is the ideal shape that allows everything to be under the control of one central controlling authority and preventing them from scattering around, dashing against each other chaotically, or running amok and getting lost in a tangential manner. The natural forces of centripetal and centrifugal begin to play simultaneously to ensure a circular outline.

In the present case of the creation, the sky represents the supreme Brahm around which the rest of the creation revolves. So in metaphysics this Brahm is like the physical sun in the sky, the rest of the planetary system that goes around the sun in circles is like the rest of the creation that revolves around this Brahm. This is the macrocosmic picture, while the microcosmic counterpart would the Atma around which the rest of the being

of the creature revolves. Even the microscopic atom is shaped like a sphere or ball because the electrons must take this shape if they have to remain in their place orbiting around the central nucleus. The sky appears to be like an inverted hemisphere, but considering the fact that what we see is only the half part of it, it follows that the when we complete the hemisphere it would be circle.]

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 13 = The realm of the earth has a symbolic four-cornered outline (shape). Its patron God is Brahma. The realm of the water has the symbolic shape of a crescent moon and its patron God is Lord Vishnu (13).

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 14 = The realm of the fire element is triangular in shape, and its patron God is Lord Rudra (the angry form of Shiva).

The realm of the air or wind element has a hexagonal shape and its patron deity is Sankarshan[1] (14).

[Note—[1]Sankarshan is the older brother of Lord Krishna, i.e. Balaram, according to the Purans. The word literally means 'well drawn'. In his earlier incarnation, he was Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram. Laxman was an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary hooded serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar. Hence, Sankarshan is Lord Seshnath who is supposed to support the earth on its hoods.]

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 15 = The realm of the sky is rounded (and that is why we see the sky like a inverted hemisphere). Its patron deity is Sriman Narayan (Vishnu) (15).

(ii) How to do meditation by contemplating upon these five elements have been described in Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 5, verse nos. 49-51. Let us see what it has to say—

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 49 = When his mind meditates about and experiences the presence of Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) in the head, i.e. when the enlightened ascetic is able to experience the presence of the supreme transcendental source of eternal bliss and peace known as Brahm in the region of the Vyom Chakra and the Brahm Randhra Chakra by focusing the attention of his mind and the energy of his vital winds called Pran there, he is able to vanquish thirst and hunger (for worldly things, sensual pleasures and material comforts) along with overcoming the bad affects of all (spiritual) poisons[1]. [That is, by becoming Brahm-realised and experiencing its attendant spiritual ecstasy and bliss, the ascetic has nothing more to desire and wants nothing in this material world. The enjoyments and comforts of this material world are transient, artificial and inconsequential as compared to this spiritual high of ecstasy and bliss experienced by Brahm-realisation. He is deemed to have overcome all spiritual hurdles by way of overcoming the numerous faults and imperfections that create uncountable obstacles in his spiritual progress and reaching of the ultimate goal of emancipation and salvation.]

When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the earth element[2] and contemplating about it, he acquires the mystical powers that allow him to take his mind to any corner of the earth, even in beyond it to the nether world called Patal. [That is, this mystical power empowers him to transcend all physical and geographical barriers that usually impede

the reach of an ordinary man, and his mind can go anywhere without any hindrance. He can think of everything that exists on this earth, and his mind can even visualise what is hidden inside the bowls of the earth and beyond it. While living on one part of the earth, he can know what is happening on its other side. This also would imply that nothing in this world would ever influence his mind and captivate it by trapping it in its charm and preventing it from breaking free from its shackles and proceeding ahead.] (49).

[Note—[1]Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 57-60, 62-64.

[2]Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 85-87.]

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 50 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the water element[1] and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he need not fear from any harm being caused to him from water in any form, such as drowning in it or suffering from any water borne disease or some internal medical problems arising out of water such as oedema of lungs, dropsy of tissues and other diseases due to misbalance in the water content of the body.]

Similarly, when his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the fire element[2] and contemplating about it, he has nothing to fear from this element. [That is, he cannot be burnt by fire; his body never has to suffer from lack of vital heat and energy; he never suffers from fever and other diseased due to misbalance in the fire element in Nature. Besides this, his speech acquires all the potent of this element because fire is said to be an integral part of the faculty of speech. He has proper eyesight because again the fire and its light are responsible for the faculty of sight to function properly. He has not to suffer from lack of hunger or digestive problems because the fire is responsible for the proper functioning of both.] (50).

[Note—[1]Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 88-90 ½ .

[2]Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos.90-94.]

"Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 51 = When his mind is engrossed and focused in meditating upon the air or wind element[1] and contemplating about it, he is deemed to have acquired the ability to move in the sky like birds. [That is, he becomes so light that he can float in the air.]

By fixing his mind in the exalted sky element[2], which is a metaphoric way of saying that by becoming as exalted and sublime as the supreme Brahm himself who has an exalted abode as high as the sky, such a realised and acclaimed ascetic can acquire such mystical and eclectic powers as Anima etc.[3] (51).

[Note—[1]Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 95-97.

[2]Refer Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102.

[3]Anima is one of the eight mystical powers that are collectively called Siddhis.]

(iii) According to Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 1, there are five basic or primary elements in creation, and the rest of the creation has evolved from them. These are sky, air/water, fire/energy, water and earth. This entire Canto is dedicated to the elaboration of this philosophy.

(iv) How the five basic elements were used to create this world has been described in Paingalo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2 as follows—"The

supreme creator or Lord called 'Isha' took fractions of the five primary elements (i.e. sky, air, water, fire and earth) that he had created first to create the gross bodies of the individual creature as well as the gross body of the entire creation[1]. [In other words, the same ingredients were used by him to mould the individual creature's body as well as the rest of the creation. This observation has a great import—although no two creatures are alike, and though the external form and shape and size and colour and contour of any two individual creatures might be different, but they are fundamentally the same. When it is extended to the rest of the creation, then the notion of non-duality, uniformity and universality in creation is easy to understand.]

The 'earth' element was used to create the skull, skin, intestines, bones, flesh and nails. From the 'water' element he created blood, urine, saliva and sweat etc. From the 'fire' element he produced hunger, thirst, heat, infatuations, passions, lust and sexual instincts etc. From the 'wind or air' element he crafted the virtue of 'motion and activity' such as walking, sitting, getting up, going places, breathing, speaking etc. And from the 'sky' element were produced such traits as Kaam (worldly desires, passions, yearnings etc.) and Krodh (anger, vehemence, wrathfulness, short temper, indignation etc.).

The gross body so produced from these fundamental primary elements naturally had all the traits that were inherently present as an integral part and defining attributes of these individual elements. Therefore, the body of the creature exhibited all the attributes and characteristics present in the ingredients used to make up its body. The body that the creature assumed further depended upon the cumulative effects of the deeds which the creature had done in the past[2]. Since the body took a birth in as much it had 'come into being' and was 'not eternal and without a birth', it had to pass through various stages of change and development (i.e. evolution) such as childhood, etc., and had to suffer from their accompanying sufferings (2).

[Note— [1]By saying that Brahm had created the five basic elements and subtly entered them to empower them with their characteristic qualities it is meant that these elements were bestowed with some fundamental qualities which were deemed most essential and necessary to conceive and implement, then develop, nourish and sustain, and finally close the process of creation as envisioned by Brahm. It was like a delegation of his majestic powers by Brahm, vesting these entities with those powers and necessary authority that were deemed absolutely essential to implement the Lord's ideas of creation.

Thus, the 'earth' was given the virtue of fertility and providing nourishment, sustenance to the creation as well as to act as a base and foundation for all the forthcoming creation; it was vested with a vast and inexhaustible reservoir of natural resources so as to provide the creation with the necessities of daily life in abundance. The 'water' was vested with the power of digesting and then equally distributing nourishment to all the parts of creation; of providing the vital sap and nectar for fostering life. The 'fire' element obviously was assigned the task of giving required energy, heat and light. The 'air or wind' element provided the breathing and the gases needed for life; it helped in movement and carrying of information as sound waves. The 'sky' element acted as the great cosmic womb in which the entire creation would be conceived, live and finally find its rest.

To ensure that none of these elements got the better of the other, the cosmic creator ensured a fine balance by neutralizing one with the other. For example, 'fire' had its antidote in water and air (because no matter how fierce the fire is, it can be doused by water and blown away by wind); the 'water' element had its antidote in fire and earth (because the fire can evaporate water and make it vanish, while the water vanishes in the bowl of the earth in a desert); the 'air or wind' had its nemesis in the fire and sky (because even though the air is static it is forced to move when heated, and the strongest of storms vanish in the endless bowls of the sky); the 'earth' element has found its balancing factor in the sky, water and fire elements (because at the end of its tenure the earth would disintegrate and vanish in the sky, the earth is but a tiny dot in the deep dark recesses of the cosmos; at the time of the great dooms-day deluge the earth would be submerged in water, and the fire can scorch earth and render it un-inhabitable); and finally the 'sky' also has its antidote in the rest of the four elements (because the sky symbolising space cannot and does not exist in solid rocks or earth, a block of ice or water, in a fierce fire because that fire occupies all space to burn and would chase away every trace of air inside it, and inside specific gases which are forms of air).]"

(v) The location, colours and Beej Mantras of the five elements have been described in Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 85-102. It goes on to describe how meditation is to be done on these five elements as manifestations of the stupendous dynamic powers of Brahm which has enabled this existence to come into being and sustain itself independently, as well as the rewards or benefits of such meditation. To quote—

"Verse no. 85 = The earth element is present as a dominant force from the foot to the knees. This earth has four directions, has a subtle yellow colour, and its seed Mantra is the Sanskrit letter (Varna) 'La' (as in 'love'). [There is another connotation of this last part of the verse. The earth is said to contain large and infinite deposits of 'salts' as ores etc. The ocean is also salty. The last word of this verse, i.e. 'Lavarna', indicates this fact.] (85).

"Verse no. 86 = This is the place where the patron God of earth known as Brahma, the four armed and four headed[1] creator of creation, has his symbolic presence. [In other words, the earth is represented by the creator Brahma. This is because the entire living world as we know it is present here on earth and no other planet. The earth is the only known inhabited part of the entire creation where creatures having life and consciousness in them—right from the one-celled amoeba up to the most complex and intelligently developed ones like the humans—live.]

In order to witness his presence and have his (Brahma's) subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the earth element along with its seed Mantra 'La' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Brahma with the above features and with the complexion of gold (86).

[Note—[1]There is a lot of symbolism in Hinduism, and if it is not properly understood in the correct context, a lot of hilarious, absurd and ridiculous situations arise, such as this Brahma with 'four arms and four heads'. From a rational perspective, this is absolute rubbish. But if one were to understand the underlying symbolism and philosophy, things assume a rational meaning. The four heads of Brahma stand for the four Vedas he

created or pronounced. These Vedas are the repositories of all knowledge that exist in this creation, and they are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. The four arms stand for the four directions of the globe—the north, west, south and east. Since he is the creator of the visible creation, he is expected to take care of the entire earth because it is on earth that all living creatures created by him would live.

Therefore, his four arms are symbolic of his duty and ability of taking care of all the four corners of this living world, and the four Vedas indicate his all-encompassing and all-inclusive knowledge, wisdom and erudition that empower and enable him to do so.

The colour of gold indicates the colour of richness, prosperity and fertility. The egg's yolk is also yellow because it harbours life and is rich with all essential nutrients needed by the nascent creation in its miniature form as the embryo.]

"Verse no. 87 = By concentrating one's attention and doing meditation for a period of five Ghatis (two hours) in the above described manner, an ascetic is able to conquer or subdue the earth element; he becomes the Lord of this element. Such an ascetic never dies due to some kind of shortcoming, fault, weakness or imperfection of the earth element in the body, or any injury caused by it to the body (87).

"Verse no. 88 = The water element has a predominant presence in the region from the knee to the anus. It is symbolically shaped like a half-moon, and its seed Mantra is 'Vam' (as in 'vulgar + sum) (88).

"Verse no. 89-90 = This is the place of symbolic residence of the patron God of water known as Sri Narayan (Lord Vishnu), the four armed, exalted and high Lord who has a crown over his head[1] (indicative of his position as the Lord and emperor of the entire living world), who is pure as crystal (because he is untainted, without any blemish and cannot be demoted from his exalted stature inspite of the fact that he has to look after the routine chores of taking care of the mundane affairs of the multifaceted world ridden with corruption and blemishes of all imaginable types, being its sustainer, nourisher and protector), and who is wearing a yellow coloured cloth (symbolic of his ability to sustain, nourish and protect the world as its emperor).

In order to witness his presence and have his subtle vision, the ascetic should inject and cover the water element along with its seed Mantra 'Vam' with the vital winds or airs so that they are blended and a harmony is established between them. This results in the revelation of Narayan with the above features in his inner self. He should focus his attention and mind on this vision for a period of five Ghantis (two hours). This helps him in getting rid of all sins and their evil consequences (89-90).

[Note—[1]Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and protector of all creatures. His four arms are indicative of this unique ability of his. Now, let us see what are those four units of creation which he is supposed to look after.

There are four types of creatures—viz. (i) 'Andaj' (those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) 'Swadej' (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) 'Udbhij' (those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) 'Jaraayuj' (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man).

Then we have four classes of people in the society, called the four Varanas, and each has four phases, called the four Ashrams. The Hindu society has been divided into

four sections or classes by ancient sages to regulate its functioning by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. These four sections are— (a) Brahmins—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras —the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

Finally, the four Ashrams are the following—(a) Brahmacharya—this is the 1st phase of life in which a person studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a wise teacher. This phase of life is marked by austerities, keeping of vows, observing celibacy, abstinence and continence as well as leading a regimental life style of a boarding school. (b) Grihasta—when a person has studied and prepared himself to face the world, he comes back to his house and enters the 2nd phase called Grihasta Ashram which is a householder's life. He marries, raises a family, produces wealth and helps to carry forward the cycle of creation. This is the most important and enjoyable phase as well as the most tough one because on the one hand there are the comforts and pleasure of the world to be enjoyed, and on the other hand there are the various tribulations and miseries of a family life alongside the dealings with this deceptive world with all its accompanying horrifying problems. (c) Vanprastha—this is the 3rd phase when a man hands over the responsibilities of the world to his heirs and renounces his attachments to the house as well as the world, and heads for the forest, leaving the home for his next generation. It is now that he goes on pilgrimage and prepares for the final stage of his life, and (d) Sanyas—this is the 4th and last stage of life when there is complete cutting-off of all the ties with the world, spending time in contemplation and mediation, living a life of total renunciation, and begging for food for survival while single mindedly endeavouring for emancipation and salvation. This phase of Sanyas also has many stages depending upon the spiritual elevation and accomplishments of the aspirant, viz. Kutichak, Bahudak, Hansa, Paramhans, Turiyatit and Avadhut.

These four Ashrams, their characteristic features and virtues are described in detail in an Upanishad called 'Ashramo-panishad' belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Thus we see that the four arms of Vishnu are indicative of his unique ability to protect the entire world of living creatures.]

"Verse no. 91 = After that, the ascetic need not fear from the water element in anyway, and neither would he die due to it (such as by drowning or by dehydration or thirst).

The fire element has its dominant presence from the anus to the heart region. [That is why all digestion of food and all the major internal organs that are responsible for the upkeep

of the body and to continue the cycle of creation and prevent its extinguishing, such as the intestines, kidneys, the reproductive organs, the pancreas etc. are located in this region. It is here that the Kundalini is also located at the base of the spine. Without the presence of the heat in the lower part of the body, the vital airs cannot be heated and empowered to lift the body of an ascetic as has been described in verse no. 53-55 of this Upanishad. In practical life also we observe that the fire is always present at the lower end of the oven and not on its top.] (91).

"Verse no. 92 = The fire element has three corners (i.e. it is shaped symbolically like a triangle), has a red colour and the Sanskrit letter 'Ra' (as in 'run') as its seed or root Mantra. This fire should be stoked and ignited by injecting the air or wind element into it. [This is a common day phenomenon that the fire needs air to remain burning.] (92).

"Verse no. 93 = This is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes[1], who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendorous, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).

[Note—[1]As in the case of Brahma and Vishnu, the symbolism of Shiva having three eyes, which on the face of it appears to be an anomaly, is the following—his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the 'fire element' in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!]

"Verse no. 94 = By meditating this way on the fire element and Lord Shiva for a period of five Ghantis (two hours), the ascetic cannot be tormented by the fire element so much so that it cannot burn or scorch him even if he is made to enter a fiercely burning fire (94).

"Verse no. 95 = The next vital primary element is the air element and it is primarily located in the body between the heart and the middle of the eyebrows in the forehead. It has a

symbolic shape of a hexagon, is dark hued, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ya' (as in 'yearn'). The apex of this hexagon is at the point in the forehead where the two eyebrows meet, and where the third eye of wisdom is said to be located. That is why it is said to possess the quality of 'Bhaasvar', i.e. to be as bright as the sun during the day time (95).

[Note—In practical terms also, the primary wind that sustains life inside the otherwise dead and inane body is the breath that is inhaled thorough the nose and diverted to the lungs. Both these organs are located in the body in the region between the heart and the mid point of the eyebrows. If we join these organs, i.e. if a line is drawn linking the two lobes of the lungs, the triangular heart, the two shoulders and the root of the nose which has two openings, we will come with a rough shape of a hexagon. The lower-end point would be roughly the lower end of the sternum (i.e. the mid point between the heart and the lungs, the middle of the body where the ribs meet and the heart is felt to throb), and the other end is the root of the nose between the two eyebrows. Since the lower end is embedded in the abdomen, it is said to be 'dark or Krishna' in hue, while the upper end is said to be 'Bhaasvar' or like the sun because it is the location of the two eyes as well as the third eye of wisdom.]

"Verse no. 96 = The vital air or wind element is located in the body in the designated place marked by the letter 'Ya' of the Sanskrit language (as described in verse no. 95). The ascetic should always remember the all-knowing, omniscient and all-pervading Lord of all creation, known as Ishwar, in this region. This Lord is called 'Vishwatomukham', literally the face of the entire world1 (96).

[Note—The Ishwar is called the 'face of the world' obviously because when we see anyone, we first see his face and the person is recognised by his face. Since the entire creation is the visible manifestation of the supreme Brahm, it is the visible face of Brahm or Ishwar. This Ishwar is also the all-pervading supreme Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma which resides in the individual creature as his true 'self', as well as in the form of the universal Spirit that is indistinguishable from the air or wind element which pervades throughout the world. Even as the air element is uniformly and universally present everywhere in this creation, this 'spirit' is therefore also present in equal measure everywhere. This spirit in the form of the air element is Ishwar or Lord of the world in the sense that no life is possible without it on this earth.]

"Verse no. 97 = If the ascetic meditates upon the supreme Lord called Vishwatomukh for a continuous period of five Ghantis (two hours), he can travel or move about in the sky just like the wind or air element. [In other words, he becomes as light as the air or wind element.] He has no fear from this element anymore and he never dies due to this element. [In other words, he never suffers from any disease related to the air or wind in the body such as from asthma, flatulence, improper movement of bowls, digestion, distribution of nutrients and blood inside the body, and all other functions that are governed by one or the other vital winds inside the body. He has not to suffer from suffocation and the fear from falling from a high place and dieing because in that case he would float in the air. Storms and other fierce forms of the wind cannot harm him also.] (97).

"Verse no. 98 = The sky element is located between the point midway of the two eyebrows and the top of the head. It is shaped like the sky (i.e. featureless, measureless and like an inverted parabolic transparent dish or bowl), is of the colour of smoke, and its seed or root Mantra is the Sanskrit letter 'Ha' (as in 'hut'). It is illuminated with a diffused light like the sky is during the daytime (98).

"Verse no. 99 = The ascetic should inject this sky element and fill it with the air or wind, and visualise that Lord Shankar (Shiva) is present here, seated on the letter 'Ha[1]'. This Lord is a personification of the great Lord of all the Gods, and hence also known as Mahadeva[2], literally the great God. This Mahadeva is like a dot or point[3] on the one hand, and like the vast, endless, featureless and infinite sky[4] on the other hand. In the latter form he is known as Sada Shiva[5], i.e. the eternal and ever-present Lord Shiva (99).

[Note—[1]There is a lot of brilliant symbolism here. The letter 'Ha' is the first letter of the word 'Hans', meaning the divine swan. This bird is said to be very clean and wise, and therefore is the vehicle of the goddess of learning and wisdom, goddess Saraswati. By saying that the patron Lord of the sky element sits on this letter 'Ha', it is meant that this Lord is wisdom, erudition, learning and knowledge personified, he has full command over them. Hence he is the supreme Brahm.

[2]By this logic, Shankar is another name of Brahm. Since Brahm is the one from whom the entire creation has emerged, he is the greatest of all the Gods and their Lord, hence he is called Mahadeva. Thus, Mahadeva and Shankar become interchangeable and synonymous.

[3]The origin of the creation was due to a vibration in the cosmic primordial gel much like ripples on the surface of a calm lake. This generated waves and these waves created energy to power the initial phases of the process of creation. But the vibration must have started from one single point. This is the 'dot' referred in this verse. It also refers to the fact that everything in existence has its origin from one 'point' source known as Brahm. The concept of Bindu and 'dot' have been explained in Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 37, 39-40, and Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

[4]Now, this Brahm is not limited to one single point, but it spread as far and wide as the vast sky could spread. It was diffused in the sky like smoke, and that is why the colour of the sky element is symbolically depicted to be like that of the smoke.

[5]'Shiva' means someone who is auspicious, truthful and beautiful, and 'Sada' means one who is always the same, is constant, perpetual, consistent, ever-present, uniform and universal. All these qualities are present in the supreme Brahm. That is why the latter is called Sada Shiva.

So in a nutshell, Shankar and Shiva is the same great God who is the Lord of all the Gods as well as of the rest of the creation, i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified, besides possessing all the qualities of wisdom, erudition, sagacity, knowledge, expertise, various skills etc. personified by goddess Saraswati riding on the Hans. The concept of 'Hans' has been elaborately explained in a number of Upanishads, viz. (a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyan Bindu

Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, and Canto 6, verse no. 20, 52-54. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hanso-panishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 82-83.]

"Verse no. 100 = This Lord Shiva is most pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishads deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishads is personified here in him.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a crescent moon on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called 'one Pada' or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The five heads of Shiva stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the sky or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are five subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or Koshas present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intelluctual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.— Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The ten arms of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash— the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash— the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash— the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash— the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of

space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The three eyes consist of two normal conventional eyes and the third eye of wisdom and deep insight.]

"Verse no. 101 = That Lord Shiva is armed with all types of weapons (as a symbol of protection against or to counter all sorts of worldly evils and faults that might attack a spiritual aspirant and attempt to pull him down from the exalted position that he has acquired by so hard effort). He is also decorated with numerous ornaments (as a symbol of his divine beauty and magnificence, as a token of his natural charm and a pleasant and appealing appearance). Goddess Parvati his divine consort and she literally is his other half. [That is, if Shiva is the supreme Brahm or Supreme Being, Parvati is his Prakriti and Maya. If Shiva is the Viraat Purush, Parvati is Mother Nature.] He is the one who grants boons and is the root and primary cause of all conceivable causes and reasons that exist in this world (101).

"Verse no. 102 = If that Lord Shiva is meditated upon as a personification of the sky element and as being inherently present in this element, it is certain that the practitioner is able to acquire the mystical powers to move through the sky (like a bird or other sky-borne creatures).

By this meditation, the spiritual aspirant feels an immense sense of satisfaction and happiness no matter where he lives[1] (102).

[Note—[1]This is because he feels the freedom to move about any where he likes, and is not constrained to the earth. Another interpretation is that he feels as light as the air or wind element because this is the only element that fills the entire space of the sky and can move in at its will. He feels unrestrained and free like the bird. He also feels untainted, unblemished, un-faulted and untarnished like the pure and colourless sky element. He feels infinite, vast, open, eternal and imperishable as the sky element. He feels himself as being all-pervading, omnipresent and all-covering just like the sky element. This notion and feeling would naturally be spiritually and emotionally uplifting and morale boosting for him; he would feel elated and accomplished.]"

(vi) How the body of the creature is formed by the five elements have been described in Shaarirako Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1 as follows—" This gross body of

the creature is a combination of the five basic elements in creation called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts', such as earth etc. (the others being water, fire, air and sky)[1].

The solid, thicker, denser and heavier part of the body is made up of the earth element. [For example, the bones, skin, nails, hairs etc.]

The fluid part is made up of the water element. [For example, blood, lymph, semen, mucous, urine, semi-solid stool etc.] The heat and warmth in the living body is the fire element. [A dead body is ice-cold, and since the fire element is missing in such a body, it cannot live and is deemed to be lifeless.]

The constant movement and restlessness that is so typical of any living organism is a manifestation of the air or wind element. [This movement may not be externally visible, but is always there in some form or the other. For example, the heart continues to beat and the blood flows uninterruptedly even while a man sleeps; all the internal organs such as the kidneys, lungs, intestines, brain etc. continue to function during this state though externally there is no activity. A man breathes continuously though 'breath' cannot be visibly seen. Breath is nothing but the air element in its life-giving role. The Trishkhi Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 8 says that the movement of the consciousness inside the body is through the different Naadis or ducts such as nerves, veins and the like. This consciousness is metaphorically represented by the different 'Gods' that are said to moving in these Naadis and controlling their respective functioning. These Gods who personifies various forces of Nature are also metaphors for the Pran's different forms because they regulate life in a living body. In other words, the 'consciousness' and 'Pran' or the wind element are synonymous with each other and together are equally responsible to keep the body alive. The body of any living being cannot survive without either of them. Even immobile forms of living creation such a plants continue their activities day and night without resting for a moment. The importance of air for the life can be proved by keeping someone in a vacuum—sure enough he would die immediately. In fact, life and movement are synonymous with each other; only a dead body shows no movement in the real sense. Similarly, life and air are also synonymous with each other.]

The hollow space present in the body in a very subtle and invisible form (such as the space between the organs and the inter-cellular space, and even the space inside the cell between its constituent parts, the pores on the skin, the hollow of the nostrils, the auditory canal, the hollow of the mouth and anus, the air passage of the lungs and the food passage of the digestive canal et al.) is made up of the sky or space element (1).

Note—[1]The five primary elements called the 'Tattvas' came into being at the very beginning of creation. The Tattvas are the primary or fundamental elements or units or dimensions or aspects of creation which act as the building blocks of creation, not only as its brickwork but also to decide the shape its exterior façade would take as well as the interior character and quality of the construction.

We have primary elements that were formed at the time of creation, and the secondary elements that developed later on as offshoots to the process of creation. Primarily there were five basic elements—such as the sky, air or wind, fire or energy,

water and earth in increasing order of density or grossness. From them came the secondary elements. These latter vary according to the level and dynamics of creation one is dealing with in terms of metaphysics. These elements can be compared to the elements of material science of the modern world, such as the elements calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium etc. which are heavier and grosser in nature as compared to other elements such as the gases oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen, helium etc. which are lighter and subtler. Then there is carbon which is the base of an entire field of chemistry called organic chemistry, much like we have Atma in metaphysics, that in association with different other elements form a vast array of organic chemicals and material products of daily use. If carbon is compared to the basic unit called the Atma in metaphysics, then the other elements that combine with it are the various Gunas, Vikaars, Vasanas and Vrittis that surround this Atma to give rise to an uncountable number of creatures of different virtues, nature, temperaments, characters and personalities.

In this scenario, Brahm would be like the primary Atom which left to itself is neutral and inactive. It is only when certain changes take place in its core, such as the shift in the position of its electron or change in the number of its protons and electrons etc. that the chain of reaction starts that would ultimately result in not only producing newer elements that combine in mind-boggling permutations and combinations to create an endless array of material things, but also releasing energy in the process or absorbing matter from the surrounding atmosphere. At the cosmic level this is seen in exploding stars or formation of huge black-holes.

The Atma would be more like the atom of carbon which is at the heart of all organic compounds that exist in this world, while Brahm would be the primary form of the atom, i.e. the atom of the first element of the Periodic Table with atomic number 1, or even the nucleus of other heavier atoms of the higher elements of this Table from atomic number 2 onwards.]

(vii) The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 69 describes that Yoga brings about a union between the various elements or Dhaatus of the body. These Dhaatus are five primary elements, seventeen and twenty three secondary elements which would depend upon the system of classification adopted, nine tertiary elements, and finally the seven structural elements. Now let us see which are they.

(a) The Primary level of the elements—This consists of the five primary elements called the 'Pancha Mahabhuts'. They were formed at the beginning of creation, and consist of earth, water or fluid, fire or energy, air or wind and sky or space elements in increasing degree of subtlety.

They can be studied at two levels—one at the very core level, and the other at the more general level.

(a) (i) The study of the body at the core level of the five Bhuts consisting of the five primary elements consisting of the sky or space, air or wind, fire or energy, water or fluids, and earth. Refer verse nos. 1-2, and 5-6 of Shaarirako-panishad. Briefly, the earth element formed the solid part of the body, the water element formed the fluid part, the fire element formed the warmth and heat of the body, the movement of the body is revelation of the air element, and the

subtle space between various organs and tissues of the body, both at the external as well as internal levels, is the sky element.

(a) (ii) The next level would the various Koshas or Sheaths that are made of a combination of these five elements. They are the following—Anna Maye Kosh (the food sheath), Pran Maye Kosh (the vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mind sheath), Vigyan Maye Kosh (the intellect sheath), and Anand Maye Kosh (the bliss sheath). These Koshas are also like the elements or units that decide the complexities of the creature's body and its position in the hierarchy of evolution.

All the living organisms can be classified into the following five types depending upon the number of Koshas they have—(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kosha, the Anna Maye Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder. (ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Koshas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom. (iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Koshas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kosh refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level. (iv) Jaraayuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Koshas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kosh refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Koshas. Besides the four Koshas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

(b) The secondary level of study of the body and its structure would be at the level of the Tattvas. It consists of the Linga Deha made up of the seventeen Tattvas which are seventeen dimensions or units or elements that constitute it—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaan,

Samaan, Vyan and Udaan) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 16.]

The gross body can be further classified as consisting of twenty three elements. They are the following—

(1) The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

(2) Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

(3) Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.] (4) The eight Vikaars such as one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse). These elements are called the eight 'Vikaars' (literally meaning faults, errors, shortcomings or imperfections) that are present in Nature and affect the basic nature of all living beings.

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—5 organs of perceptions + 5 organs of action + 5 senses of perceptions + 8 Vikaars = total 23. [Reference Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 17-19.]

(c) The next level of study of the body is the tertiary level. The tertiary elements that constitute the body all living beings would be the following nine—the three Gunas such as the Sata which the best quality in creation, the Raja which is the medium quality, and the Tama which is the lowest quality (refer Shaarirako-panishad, verse nos. 7-13), and the six aspects of Anatahakarans which is the inner self of the creature consisting of the sub-conscious or conscience that governs his innate character. The five aspects of Anthahakaran are the following (1) Mana or mind, (2) Buddhi or intellect, (3) Chitta or the faculty of concentration and memory; knowledge and consciousness, (4) Ahankar or ego, pride, arrogance, (5) Vrittis or inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments of a creature based on these basic components of the subtle body—refer Paingalo-panishad, Canto 2, verse no. 3), and (6) the various Vasanas (worldly passions, lusts and yearnings—Muktiko-panishad, Canto 2). The total comes to 3 + 6 = 9. These nine decide the inherent character and basic nature and temperament of the creature.

(d) The 7 Dhaatus—The structural features of the gross physical body consists of the so-called seven Dhaatus. These stand for the structural constituent of the body which supports and sustains its existence. According to ancient Indian system of medicine, they are the

following—(1) Rasa (lymph and mucous; sap), (2) Rakta (blood), (3) Maansa (flesh), (4) Meda (fat and muscles), (5) Ashthi (bones and cartilage), (6) Meja (marrow), and (7) Shukra (semen).

According to other interpretations, these seven Dhaatus which form the structural features of the gross body and give it its shape and support it are the following—(1) all forms of fluid ingredients such as blood, urine, mucous, lymph etc, (2) bone and cartilage, (3) marrow, (4) flesh, fat and muscles, (5) abdominal organs such as stomach etc, (6) skin, and (7) Naadis (arteries, veins, capillaries and nerves).

(e) The structure of the body as explained in the Upanishads can be easily understood when we analyse it in the context of modern science of chemistry. This gross body of a creature can be compared to the molecular structure of any chemical substance or any thing in this world for that matter that is made up of certain basic elements. The molecules are also not visible to the naked eye just like the ingredients of the body mentioned above except some of them such as the skin and mucous much like the external features of the finished chemical product.

At the next level comes the atomic structure, or the subtle level of constitution of the body. It is like the atoms of any chemical molecule that make up the basic building blocks or units of that molecule. For example, Benzene has a hexagonal structure which would be like the gross structure of the creature's body called the Dhaatu, while the Carbon and Hydrogen atoms (C6H6) that go in to form the basic and fundamental ingredients of Benzene are like its subtle structure called the Bhut.

To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved. Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular

formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

(viii) The activities and pyramidal structure of the five elements have been described in Shaarirako Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 6 as follows—"Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight), taste and smell—these are the five activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the earth element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), shape and form (sight) and taste—these are the four activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the water element.

Word (hearing, sound), touch (feeling), and shape and form (sight)—these are the three activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the fire element.

Word (hearing, sound) and touch (feeling)—these are the two activities which are described as the characteristic virtues displayed by the air or wind element.

And word (hearing and sound) is the only one activity which is described as the characteristic virtue displayed by the sky element (6).

[Note—Refer explanation given in verse no. 2. To understand how one element can transform itself into so many forms, we can take the example of isomerism in chemistry. The word 'iso' means the 'same', and 'meros' means 'parts'. Hence, isomerism refers to the phenomenon whereby two or more compounds that are composed of the same chemical formulae, i.e. they have the same molecular composition but different three dimensional structures; they differ in physical or chemical properties. Such things are called 'isomers' of the principal element.

Extended further, this phenomenon of isomerism would apply to the concept of the same Atma residing in all the living beings having a mind boggling variety of physical structures, besides the fact that all the creatures have the same Atma as well as the same basic elements as their essential identity.

Then there are two types of isomerism—i.e. structural isomerism and stereo isomerism. The concept of structural isomerism refer to those isomers which have the same molecular formulae but different structural arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms around the central atom or ion called Structural Isomers and this phenomenon is called structural isomerism. This would be like different species of living organisms which have the same Atma at the core, the same set of fundamental five elements set up around this basic core, and then comes the arrangements of secondary elements around this basic core to give rise to varying structural variations in the species as they evolved.

Stereo isomerism is when the same molecular formulae represents two or more compounds which differ in the spatial arrangement of atoms or groups of atoms. Such compounds are called Stereo Isomers. In this case, we deal with one given species such as the human species which have all the gross features the same but the internal geometric patterns in which the secondary and tertiary elements exist determine the individuality of a particular man and sets him aside from all others of his ilk.

A related concept is isomorphism wherein there is apparent similarity of form between individuals belonging to different races or species. In the field of chemistry it refers to the existence of two or more chemical compounds with the same crystal structure; they differ in chemical composition but have the same crystalline structure. This would be like speaking of the entire human race, or of all the mammals for instance who would exhibit similar external features but have different internal chemistry in the sense that all have their own set of characteristic qualities, virtues and values, their own independent personality, intelligence, emotional quotient etc. Their mental and intellectual setup, their emotional and sentimental quotient, their inherent natural temperaments and inclinations etc. would differ from one individual to another depending upon the combination in which the three Gunas (Sata, Raja and Tama) exist in them.

In this context, the three Gunas that determine the individual character of the creature, that determine his 'individuality' as compared to the general character of the group to which that individual belongs, are like the isotopes in chemistry. The isotope refers to the phenomenon wherein one of two or more atoms of the same chemical element that contain the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei and therefore have the same atomic number and chemical properties but

different mass numbers and physical properties. For example, two brothers have the same genes and the same inheritance, but the presence of the three Gunas in different ratios between them changes their personality and thought processes. One may be a highly righteous man while the other might be just the opposite. Their parents are the same, their upbringing is the same, they have attended the same school and ate the same food, but there is a deep chasm when it comes to their character as individuals.

The verse clearly outlines the pyramidal structure of the primary elements in creation. The 'earth' being the grossest and heaviest is at the base, while the 'sky' being the subtlest and lightest is at the top, with the rest of the three elements, viz. the 'water', the 'fire' and the 'air' being arranged in an ascending manner clearly show their declining grossness and increasing subtlety.]"

The 8 Tattwas—According to the definition of Prakriti as described in the standard Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Monier-Williams, M.A., K.C.I.E., the eight fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the following—one Avyakta (that supreme entity that is un-manifest and intangible but nevertheless at the basis of everything that exist) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (the inherent nature of having ego and pride) + and five Tanmatras or the subtle bodies consisting of the five sense perceptions, such as the faculties of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. These are also called the Prakriti or nature of an individual creature at the micro level as well as of the creation at the macro level.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, these eight fundamental Elements or Tattwas in creation are the following—earth, water, fire, wind and sky constituting the gross body of the creature, and the two other subtle elements consisting of the Mana (mind and intellect) and 'Ahankar' (ego, pride) which constitute the subtle body of the creature.

The 9 Tattvas—The Pashupata Brahmin Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 14 says that there are nine Tattvas which are actually subtle revelations of the supreme Brahm. They are the following— The three fundamental Gunas, i.e. the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, the three basic characters of the Atma known as Sat-Chit-Anand, i.e. Sat (truth), Chitta (consciousness) and Anand (bliss), and the three forms of divinity represented by the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder of creation, represent the nine Tattwas of creation.

The 16 Tattvas—The sixteen Tattvas are the following—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan) + one Mana (mind) = 16.

The fact that there are sixteen Tattvas is mentioned in Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15.

The 17 Tattvas—The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 16 describes the seventeen elements of creation at the micro level of creation. To quote—"This verse narrate how the earlier five basic elements of creation mutated and branched out to create more elements. Thus, from these five elements there arose seventeen at the micro level

of creation represented by the individual creature.

The body of the creature is called the Linga Deha. It consists of the following seventeen dimensions or units or elements—the five organs of perception (ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin) + the five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + the five Prans (the five subtle forms of the vital winds present inside the body—such as Pran, Apaan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan) + one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) = seventeen units or elements of creation at the micro level (16).

[Note—These seventeen units or elements of creation are like the secondary elements that came into being as the process of creation moved forward. They formed the gross body of the creature representing the microcosm. Out of these, five gross organs of perception and five gross organs of action form the ten elements or units of creation which are considered comparatively gross in nature. The other seven, i.e. the five winds, one mind and one intellect are the subtle elements or units of creation at the microcosmic level.]

The 18 Tattvas—The *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 24, describes the creation of the eighteen Tattvas as follows—"'Prior to the coming into being of this creation, there was only one Brahm who prevailed everywhere. In the primary stages of creation, the primary Nature known as Mool Prakriti came into existence from this Brahm. This Prakriti was 'Abyakta', i.e. it was invisible and indefinable. Since this Prakriti emerged from the Akshar (imperishable, that which does not decay) Brahm, it too had the same characteristic feature of being Akshar.

From this Avyakta Prakriti was created Mahattatva (the Great Tattva or the primary element from which the rest of the elements evolved).

From the Mahatattva was created the Ahankar (pride and ego) which was a combination of the three Gunas known as Sata (the best quality), Raja (the medium quality) and Tama (the lowest and meanest quality).

From Ahankar (dominated by the Tamas Guna) were created the five Tanmatras or senses of perception (such as smelling, tasting, hearing, feeling and seeing).

From these were produced the five Maha-Bhuts or the five elements which would act as the building blocks of the rest of the creation.

[These were the sky which was produced from the perception of hearing because sound needed space to travel and heard at a distance, the air which was produced from the perception of feeling as is evident from the fact that we can 'feel' the breeze blowing against our faces inspite of it being invisible, the fire which was produced from the perception of seeing because fire gave light that enabled to the creature to see, the water which was produced from the perception of taste as is evident from the fact that we can taste anything only when its chemicals are dissolved in the water content of the saliva in the mouth, and the earth which was produced from the perception of smelling as is proved by the fact that one smells anything on the surface of the earth, and there is no smell in outer space.]

{Though not mentioned here expressly but it would be however relevant to point out that out of the Ahankar that was dominated by the Sata Guna was created the patron Gods of the five organs of perception, and from the Ahankar dominated by the Raja Guna was created the five organs of perception in the body, such as the ear that hears, the skin that feels, the eye that sees, the tongue that tastes, and the nose that smells.}

In this way, the supreme Brahm, which is primarily Akshar (imperishable and eternal) and Avyakta (invisible and attribute-less) becomes covered or surrounded by so many layers of qualities that it appears to be quite the opposite of what it is supposed to be.

[This is simply because Brahm has not only created everything but also pervades each pore of each unit of this creation; there is nothing in this creation that is not Brahm. Hence, since even the gross and perishable aspects of this creation where the grosser of the five elements dominate, for instance the body of the creature, is a manifestation of Brahm, it gives the illusion that Brahm is gross and perishable. Another instance is of the negative dimensions of creation such as the quality of Ahankar (ego and pride) dominated by the Tama Guna. Brahm is said to be attributes and immaculate, so to say that Brahm has Ahankar would be an absurd proposition, but the fact remains that Ahankar is as much a part and parcel of creation as other positive qualities. In brief, it must be remembered that this creation is a composite of the good and the bad, and this was done by the supreme Creator to maintain a fine balance of power and qualities. He allowed the creation to take its own course, but when he decides to wind up the show he uses the negative qualities to become ascendant so as to neutralize the positive ones, and any further growth of the negative qualities brings about an implosion of the creation and its automatic end.

The result is that the true form of the supreme transcendental Brahm remains hidden from view. It can be sighted or realised only when a person becomes enlightened and understands that the Atma that drives this creation while remaining hidden from view is the truthful form of Brahm as it possesses all the eclectic qualities known to be characteristics of Brahm, while the rest of the world is the creation that is simply a grosser manifestation of this Atma.] (24).

[Note—The eighteen Tattvas are as follows—Abyakta Mool Prakriti (Primary Nature) + Mahattatva (the Great Tattava from which the rest of the Tattvas evolved) + Ahankar (pride and ego having the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama as its constituent part) + the 5 Tanmatras (perceptions of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling) + the 5 organs of perceptions (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin repectively) + the 5 patron deities of these perceptions = 18.]

The 19 Tattvas—These ninteen Tattvas or essential elements or units or dimensions or aspects of this creation are the following— five organs of perception + five organs of action + five 'Prans' or vital winds + four 'Antahakarans'. The five organs of perception are ear, nose, eyes, tongue and skin. The five organs of action are hand, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory organs. The five vitals winds are 'Pran' (breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), 'Apaan', 'Uddan', 'Samaan' and 'Vyan'. The four 'Antahakarans' are the mind, intellect, the various 'Vasanas' and the soul. The word 'Vasana' means worldly passions, lust, greed and desires.

(ii) The group of 'essential elements of life' are actually considered twenty-nine in number as follows —ninteen 'Tattavas' listed in s. no. 1 above + five perceptions + five signs of life. The five subtle perceptions are smell, speech, touch, taste and sight. The five signs of life are the gross elements such as blood, urine, stool, mucous and wind present in the body.

The 23 Tattvas—According to Tantra philosophy, this creation came into being by the union of Shiva and Shakti. This created the twenty three elements or Tattvas as follows—one Mahat + one Ahankar + the ten sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the five subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the five gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) = 23 total.

The 24 Tattvas—Reference = (i) Purans—Harvansha Puran, 14840; Mahabharat, xii, 11242; Vishnu Puran, Chapter 1, Canto 2, verse nos. 33-51. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 15.

When Shakti (cosmic energy) is added to the twenty three Tattvas of the Tantra philosophy, the total becomes 23 + 1 = 24 Tattvas.

The Mantriko-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 15, outlines the twenty-four Tattvas as follows—"Some scholars regard the supreme Purush as being an embodiment of all the twenty-four 'Tattwas[1]' (essential elements or principles of creation) combined, some regard him as a 'Vyakta' entity (i.e. that which is revealed in the form of the visible world; that which is manifest and discernible), while there are some others who treat him as 'Avyakta' (i.e. that which is invisible, un-manifest and imperceptible but nevertheless all-pervading, ubiquitous and universal. [It ought to be noted here that the concept of Prakrit[2] is intricately woven into the fabric of creation and conforms to both the views of Avyakta (un-manifest) and Vyakta (manifest). At the subtle level, Prakriti is Avyakta, while at the gross level it is Vyakta. The word would also therefore have two applications. See note.]

There are some who treat him as being of a 'dual nature' (such as a Jiva or a living creature and the supreme Brahm or the transcendental Lord from whom the entire creation originated), while others treat him as 'non-dual' in essence (i.e. they regard the entire creation as nothing but one or the other revelation of Brahm; they regard everything as Brahm; there is nothing that is not Brahm)[3].

Similarly, some regard him as having three forms as the Trinity Gods (i.e. as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder), while there are some who treat him as having 'five forms' (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti representing the cosmic energy and power of creation, sustenance and destruction, and Ganesh who is regarded as the most revered God and is worshipped first during any religious ceremony to overcome any hurdles for he is the patron God for success and achievements in any endeavour) (15).

[Note—[1]According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are twenty-four basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body

of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaan or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaan or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaan or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to = 1+1+1+11+5+5 = 24.

[2]Prakriti— The word basically means 'nature' with all its connotations. The Chambers dictionary defines it as the power that creates and regulates the world; the power of growth; the established order of things; the cosmos; the external world especially that untouched by man; the inherent qualities in anything that makes it what it is; the essence; the being; the constitution; a kind or order; naturalness; normal feeling; conformity to truth or reality; the inborn mind; the character, instinct or disposition; the vital power; the course of life; the nakedness of truth; the primitive undomesticated condition; the strength or substance of anything; a deity personifying some force of physical nature.

Sir Monier Monier-Williams, in his encyclopedic Sanskrit-English dictionary describes it thus—'making or placing before or at first'.

The word Prakriti has many connotations, viz. the original or natural or basic form or condition of anything; the original or primary nature, character, condition, constitution, temperament, disposition; the fundamental form or shape or essence or pattern or standard or model, rule; Mother Nature which has the active physical natural forces that are responsible for unfolding the creation, its sustenance and annihilation; something that is inherent, innate, genuine, unaltered, unadulterated, basic, normal, bare, naked, crude, integral and stripped of all pretensions; the fundamental pattern, form, standard and model upon which the rest of the things are based; the crude or basic or root or seed form of any word, and by extension of anything expressed; that which decides the existential mode of anything; the coefficient, the multiplier of any fundamental element.

As inherent nature and temperament of a creature, it determines the way the world behaves and thinks; it determines the basic character of the creature and the creation as a whole because the individual creature is but a single unit of the creation.

The word Prakriti also refers to the 'personified will of the Supreme Being in the creation', and it therefore is synonymous with the powers of the Supreme Being personified as Mother Nature in whose womb the entire creation has revealed itself. It is deified forces of Nature and revealed as different renowned and powerful Goddesses.

The Prakriti represents the cosmic creative will of the creator that has revealed itself as the primary female aspect of creation which is known as 'Shakti', while its male aspect is known as the 'Viraat Purush'. The Shakti is the active ingredient or force that creates and regulates everything, while the primary entity or Being whose will this Shakti is implementing is called Brahm who remains passive.

According to the Purans, this Prakriti or Nature has been personified as different Goddesses, while Brahm has been known as Viraat Purush in the terminology of Vedanta or the Upanishads, and Vishnu in the Purans. The Shakti is the female aspect of Purush, and is considered as inseparable from him; in fact they are two halves of the same Brahm. In order to create, Brahm revealed himself in these two primary forces which revealed themselves as the cosmos or Nature. As the different inherent tendencies of a creature, the forces of creation came to be known as Sattva, Raj and Tam which determines and regulates the continuous cycle of creation, sustenance and conclusion. The Purush is the male aspect while his female counterpart is the Prakriti. Since a man resides in this world, he is surrounded by Nature which casts its shadow upon him. All the maverick tricks that Mother Nature knows create an impression upon a man. He is enthralled and so overwhelmed by the deception created by Nature that he forgets about the falsehoods of what he sees, as well as about the truthful nature of his own pure self. He is deluded by false impressions so much so that they appear to be true to him. Consequentially, he drifts along in the swift currents created by those delusions. He acquires the colours of Prakriti without realising the truth about its falsehood.

According to Sankhya Shastra, Prakriti is the original producer of the material world consisting of the three Gunas or fundamental qualities that are inherent in all the creatures and they decide the character and temperament of that creature depending upon the dominance of one quality over the other two. These three Gunas are—(i) 'Sattwa', or those which are auspicious and righteous and noble, (ii) 'Raja', or worldly qualities marked by such notions as having passions, desires, greed etc. and (iii) 'Tama', or those qualities that are 'dark' by nature, such as those that are categorised as sinful and pervert, leading to a creature's moral downfall.

[3]There are umpteen numbers of Upanishads exclusively devoted to the exposition of the concept of Brahm because Brahm is central to the philosophy expounded upon and elucidated by all of them. Some of them however stand out by their name itself—e.g. Brahm Vidya Upanishad, Brahm Upanishad, Brahm Bindu Upanishad. But since the study of Brahm is the focal point of all the Upanishads, no matter to which genre they belong, this topic is discussed in all of them to a lesser or greater degree. Refer also to Niralmabo Upanishad, verse no. 6 which attempts to precisely define this term.]"

Atharva Veda's Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 2, stanza no. 6 enumerates the twenty-five Tattwas as follows—"The subtle body has twenty-five components or parts or organs called the Tattwas (elements), and they are the following—the five perceptions (of smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch), the five faculties of action (accepting, going, speaking, sensual or sexual awareness and the desire to excrete or eliminate waste), the five Prans (i.e. the vital winds or airs that sustain life inside the body—Pran or breath, Apaan, Samaan, Vyan

and Udaan), the five objects of perception (things seen, things heard, things smelt, things tasted and things felt), the four Antahakarans (i.e. the four aspects of the inner self which are Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious, and Ahankar or ego), and one un-manifest Prakriti (or the latent, hidden but inherent nature and temperament of a creature). [Refer also to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 6 of Sam Veda tradition.]"

According to Harvansha Puran, 14840, and Mahabharat, xii, 11242, there are twenty-four basic elements or Tattwas. These twenty-four fundamental Elements or Tattwas are the essential ingredients which go in to make up the body of a creature, and they are—(a) Prakriti (nature, inherent tendencies and inclinations, the fundamental truth about anything that decide its character and existential mode); (b) Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination); (c) Ahankar (pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness); (d) the eleven organs (five organs of perceptions—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue; five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory; one organ of intelligence—mind); and (e) the five vital Prans (the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaan or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaan or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaan or the wind that helps to rise); and (f) the five perceptions (sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing) bringing the total to = 1+1+1+11+5+5 = 24.

The 25 Tattvas—The Maha Upanishad of Sam Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 4-6 gives a list of the twenty-five Tattvas in the specific sequence as follows—the five sense organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) [these are the 1st five Tattvas] + the five sense organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive) [these are the 2nd five Tattvas]+ one Mana (mind) [this is the 11th Tattva] + one Ahankar (pride and ego) [this is the 12th Tattva] + one Pran (vital airs or life-giving winds) [this is the 13th Tattva] + one Atma (consciousness) [this is the 14th Tattva] + one Buddhi (intellect) [this is the 15th Tattva] + the five Tanmatras (the five subtle senses of perception such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) [these are the 16th to 20th Tattvas] + the five primary elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) [these form the 21st to 25th Tattvas] = total twenty five Tattvas. [5 + 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 5 + 5 = 25.]

According to the Naradparivrajak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 2, the twenty-five Tattwas that form the subtle body of a creature are the following—"This subtle body has twenty-five components or parts or organs called the Tattwas (elements), and they are the following—the five perceptions (of smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch), the five faculties of action (accepting, going, speaking, sensual or sexual awareness and the desire to excrete or eliminate waste), the five Prans (i.e. the vital winds or airs that sustain life inside the body—Pran or breath, Apaan, Samaan, Vyan and Udaan), the five objects of perception (things seen, things heard, things smelt, things tasted and things felt), the four Antahakarans (i.e. the four aspects of the inner self which are Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-

conscious, and Ahankar or ego), and one un-manifest Prakriti (or the latent, hidden but inherent nature of a creature)."

The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 18-20, describes the twenty five elements of creation at the macro level of creation. To quote—"The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—8 Vikaars[1] + 5 organs of perceptions[2] + 5 organs of action[3] + 5 senses of perceptions[4] = total 23 (18-19).

The twenty fourth element or unit or dimension of creation is said to be the invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature. [This brings the tally to 23 + 1 =24.]

And finally, there is the ultimate chief Authority of creation, called the supreme Purush, the Supreme Being, who forms the last unit of creation. This entity is immutable and indivisible, it is non-dual and eternal, it is infinite and imperishable, and it is all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing. Therefore there is nothing beyond it to count; it is the final frontier; there is nothing that exists beyond it that can be counted as an independent entity superseding the Chief Purush.

Thus we come to the total tally of twenty five elements. [The tally is arrived as follows—23 elements + 1 invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature called Prakriti + 1 Supreme Being called Brahm or the Viraat Purush = total 25 elements.]

In this way, the entire universe or cosmos is made up of twenty five elements."

[Note—[1]The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following— They are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse).

[2]The five organs of perception are the following—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin.

[3]The five organs of action are the following—hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory.

[4]The five perceptions are the following—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.]

According to *Sankhya Shastra*, there are twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattwas as follows—one Avyakta (the un-manifest entity known as Prakiti or cosmic Nature) + one

Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination) + one Ahankar (the inherent ego and pride that is integral to all the creatures) + five Tanmatras (senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) + eleven organs (five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue respectively + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) + one Purush (the macrocosmic Consciousness; the cosmic Self or Atma or Soul; the Male aspect of creation; the Viraat Purush who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, eternal, infinite, un-manifest and almighty Lord of creation; the macrocosmic gross body of creation).

There is another version as to what constitutes the twenty-five Tattvas. They are the following—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

The 26 Tattvas—According to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahman 1, section 4, verse no. 3, and Mantriko-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14 there are twenty-six Tattvas.

The twenty-sixth Tattwa or element is 'Hiranya-garbh', the cosmic subtle body of creation, or the cosmic golden egg from which Viraat had emerged.

According to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Brahman 1, section 4, verse no. 3, the calculation is as follows—the twenty-three elements such as 1 Mahat or Maya + 1 Ahankar + the 10 sense organs called the Indris (five organs of perception—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genital) + one Mana (mind) + the 5 subtle elements called the Tanmatras (the senses of perception—sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) + the 5 gross elements called Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) + Shakti (cosmic dynamic energy) = 24 Tattvas**. The the 25th Tattva is the Jiva, the living being who has consciousness pulsating inside his gross body, and the 26th Tattva is the Parmatma or Iswar, the Supreme Being, the Supreme Atma which is the cosmic Consciousness. [**The twenty-four Tattvas have also been described in Vishnu Puran, Chapter 1, Canto 2, verse nos. 33-51.]

According to the philosophy of Patanjali's Yoga Darshan, there are twenty-six Tattvas. Besides the twenty-five Tattvas of the Sankhya philosophy, this also includes the Ishwar or the Supreme Being as the twenty-sixth element.

The Mantriko-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 14, describes the twenty-six Tattvas as follows—"Some wise ones call the supreme Purush as a personification of the twenty-sixth 'Tattwa' (essential element or principle), while others call him as representing the twenty-seventh. Those who are expert in the Atharva-shir (Upanishad) regard that supreme Purush as being 'Nirgun Sankhya Purush[1]' (i.e. the supreme transcendental Lord who has no attributes and forms, and who has been expounded by the Sankhya philosophy) (14).

[Note—[1]The word Nirgun means one without any qualities, characters and attributes. This is because the supreme Lord is so subtle, sublime and enigmatic that all definitions fall short of even defining a fraction of his true form and nature. He is the one who has created everything, both the truthful ones as well as the false ones, and the magical part is that he is the 'spirit' of all of them—i.e. even those things that are false, such as the mirage seen in a hot desert, have their existence and the quality of being 'false' because that enigmatic Purush is subtly present in those false things as their quality of 'falsehood and illusion'. If this is true for those things that are false, then obviously those things that are actually there, those which are actually 'true' are definitely empowered and vested with the stupendous glories of that 'truthful Purush'.]"

The 27 Tattwas—The twenty-seventh Tattwa or Element is known as 'Ishwar', the macrocosmic causal body of creation. Obviously, all these elements are junior to the primary source called the Supreme Being or Brahm. Therefore, the Supreme Being or Brahm is neither the creature nor the Purush; he is neither the visible world nor the invisible creation taken independently. He is beyond such limiting definitions. Therefore, he is has certain qualities that do not fall within the ambit of ordinary creation; he has some extraordinary elements that are beyond the realm of comprehension.

The 32 Tattvas—In the context of the philosophy of Vedanta, the thirty-two elements are the following— the 5 Bhuts (primary elements such as sky, air, fire, water and earth in order of decreasing subtlety and increasing grossness) + the 5 Tanmatras (sense perceptions of smell, taste, touch/feeling, hearing/sound and sight/seeing) + the 10 sense organs (the 5 organs of perception such as nose, tongue, skin, ear, eye + the 5 organs of action such as hand, leg, mouth, excretory, genitals) + the 4 Anthakarans (Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious, Ahankar or pride and ego) + 1 Pran (vital wind that sustains life) + 1 Atma (the conscious self of the individual Jiva or living being) + 1 Parmatma (the supreme cosmic Consciousness known as Iswar, the Lord) + 1 Prakriti (Nature) + 1 Maya (delusions) + 3 Gunas (basic primal qualities that determine the overall characteristics of any single unit of creation; they are Sata Guna which is the best and the most auspicious, the Raja Guna which is the second and motivates one to sustain and protect the creation, to be involved in the world but with a positive outlook, and the Tama which is the third and the lowest of the three and motivates one to be sinful and pervert) = 32 Tattvas.]

The 36 Tattvas—The Naradparivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 8, verse no. 3 mentions that the Viraat Pranav or the macrocosmic form of Brahm transcends the thirty-six Tattvas, though it does not enumerate which are these.

The thirty-six Tattvas are the following—the 25 Tattvas as described in Shankhya philosophy[1] + 1 Iswhar (of Patanjali's Yoga Darshan) + the 8 Vikaars or faults + 1 Vyakta (that which is visible and has attributes, i.e. the Sanguna aspect of Viraat Pranav or Brahm) + 1 Avyakta (that which is not visible, not having any attributes and characteristics, i.e. the Nirguna aspect of the Viraat Pranav or Brahm) = total 36 Tattvas.

[[1]The 25 Tattvas according to the Sankhya philosophy are the following—Purush (the primary Male), Prakriti (Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

[2]The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature.]

The 94 Tattwas—The Varaaha Upanishad, canto 1, verse no. 1 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition mentions that there are ninty four Tattwas or elements, but then goes on to say in the same verse that some wise men say that there are actually ninty-six Tattwas instead of ninty-four.

However, first let us see what these ninty-six Tattvas are:— five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital + the five vital Prans which are the vital winds that regulate life in a creature—Pran or the life giving breath, Apaan or the wind which passes down the intestines and regulates digestion and excretion, Samaan or the wind that helps in even distribution of nourishment in the body, Vyan or the wind that maintains equilibrium in the body, and Udaan or the wind that helps to rise + Mana (mind) + Buddhi (intellect) + Ahankar (ego and a sense of false pride and prestige) + Chitta (sub-conscious and memory) + five Maha-Bhuts—earth, water, fire, air, space + the three types of bodies of the creature—gross, subtle and causal + the three states of existence of the consciousness—waking/Jagrat, dreaming/Swapna and deep sleep/Sushupta + the union or interaction of these thirty five elements produces the collective unit or entity which is called the twenty sixth element + the six faults that are inherent in anything that comes into being—Asti (the notion of existence in present; the concept that anything is there), Jaati (that which is born), Vardhate (that which develops and increases), Parinam (result, fruit), Kshaya (that which is subject to decay) and Naash (destruction and ruin) + the six Urmis or shortcomings—Ashan (hunger), Pipasa (thirst), Shoka (sorrows, grief, sufferings, torments), Moha (attractions, infatuations, delusions, attachments), Jara (old age and weakness), Mritu (death) + the six parts of the gross body—skin, blood, flesh, marrow, abdomen or stomach and bones + the six enemies—Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy) and Maatsarya (envy, jealousy, malice) + the three states in which the living creature interacts with the surrounding world resulting in them being idenitified by different names—Vishwa corresponding to the waking state of consciousness, Taijas corresponding to the dreaming state of consciousness, and Pragya corresponding to the deep sleep state of consciousness + the three types of inherent qualities that decide the basic character

of an individual—Sata or the best and the noblest of the three, Raja or the medium quality, and Tama or the meanest and lowest quality + the three types of deeds—those done in the past, those done in the future, and those which are being done in the present + the five actions—speak, accept, go, to expel or discard or eliminate, and enjoy and have bliss + the four functions of the mind—Sankalps (make determinations and volitions; to make vows and promises; have firm aspirations), Adhyavasaaya (to remain in a state of constant mental flux and activity; to be always active), Abhiman (pride), Avadharana (to have firmness of views, certainties, determined mind, deduction), Mudit (to be happy and exhilarated), Karunaa (compassionate, mercy, pity, empathy), Maitri (friendship, brotherhood) and Upeksha (dispassion, disinterest, neglect, indifference) + the celestial Gods representing the various forces of Nature—the directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Sun God, Pracheta (Prajapati, the guardian of mortal creation), Ashwini Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun god and the physician of the Gods), Agni (Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (Vishnu), Mritu (the Death God; Yam), Chandrama (the Moon God), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (one of the angry forms of Shiva), Kshetragya (custodian of a particular realm or area; the different custodians of the creation), and Ishwar (the supreme transcendental Lord or Brahm) = total is ninty four elements or Tattwas.

The 96 Tattvas— The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda describes the 96 Tattvas elaborately in Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14. Let us see what these 96 Tattvas are—

"Verse no. 2 = I shall now narrate for you in a sequential form the various Tattvas (essential principles) of that eclectic Brahm Vidya (knowledge pertaining to Brahm). Listen carefully[1].

The Gyan Indris, i.e. the organs of perception, are five—viz. the one with which sound is heard, i.e. the ears; the one with which anything is felt, i.e. the skin; the one with which anything is seen, i.e. the eye etc. [The others being the one with which anything is smelt, i.e. the nose; and the one with which anything is tasted, i.e. the tongue.] (2).

[Note—[1]Since the entire creation is a visible manifestation of Brahm, it follows that by understanding the basic Tattvas that constitute the fundamental units of the body of knowledge concerning Brahm, one would be able to get an idea of what really the creation is made up of, and what actually determines the overall character, nature and temperament of this creation as whole as well as of its individual units.]

"verse no. 3 = Similarly, the organs of action are five in number—viz. the one related to speech (i.e. the mouth); the hand (which accepts and does deeds), the legs (which is concerned with movement) etc. [The other two are—anus concerned with excretion, and genitals that are concerned with procreation.]

The vital winds, called Vayu, are also five in number—such as Pran (breath), Apaan (wind that moves down in the intestines) etc. [The other three being Udaan responsible for lifting the body, Vyan responsible for maintaining equilibrium and pressure within the body, and Samaan responsible for equal distribution of nutrients and blood circulation.]

The Tanmatras (the subtle senses of perception) are also five in number—viz. hearing of words (as done by the ears); feeling anything touched (as done by the skin); seeing anything and perceiving its colours, shape, size and contours (as done by the eye); tasting anything (as

done by the tongue); and smelling anything or perceiving anything by the virtue of its smell in all its variations—fragrances, scents, perfumes or even stinks etc. (as done by the nose) (3).

[Note—Refer Panch Brahm Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

"verse no. 4 = The next set of four Tattvas are the following—Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Ahankar (sense of ego, pride, arrogance, haughtiness and vanity), and Chitta (sub-conscious mind; memory and conscience).

So the entities mentioned above are called the twenty four Tattvas by those who are well versed in the knowledge of Brahm (4).

[Note—The Tattvas counted are from verse nos. 2-4 as follows—5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 = 24.]

"verse no. 5 = There are five Maha Bhuts (the great primary elements of creation) also like these twenty four Tattvas. These five are the following—earth, water, fire or energy, wind or air, and sky or space (5).

"verse no. 6 = The body of a creature has been divided into three principle types—viz. gross, subtle and causal. This fact is known by wise and expert persons.

Similarly, there are three principle states of existence—viz. Jagrat or waking state, Swapna or dreaming state, and Sushupta or deep sleep state (6).

[Note—These concepts have been elaborately described in a separate appendix dealing with the concepts of Vedanta at the end of this volume.

Briefly, the three aspects of the body are the following—The gross body is the external part of the physical body consisting of the five organs of perception such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin, and the five organs of action such as hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory. The subtle component of this body is the mind-intellect complex which plays an intermediary role between the creature and the external world. And finally there is the causal body which harbours the pure conscious Atma that is the 'cause' of the existence of the creature's life inside this body and the 'cause' of the existence of the world at large.

The three states of existence of this conscious Atma are the following—Jagrat state is the state of wakefulness when the creature remains physically active in this material world of sense objects, perceiving its inputs with the sense organs of perception as listed above, and reacting with the sense organs of action. The Swapna state is when the external gross body is asleep but the subtle body consisting of the sub-conscious mind is very much active; this is the period when one dreams. Finally, there is the state when even the sub-conscious mind goes to sleep, i.e. when there is no dream. This state of consciousness goes beyond the dreaming state and is called Sushupta literally meaning asleep in the true sense when the consciousness has no feelings or senses left in it.]

"verse no. 7 = Oh wise sage! The above mentioned Tattvas come to a total of thirty five[1].

Their composite form (which has revealed itself as this creation) is the thirty sixth Tattva[2] (7).

[Note—[1]The 35 Tattvas are arrived as follows—24 Tattvas (till verse no. 4) + 5 (verse no. 5) + 3 types of bodies + 3 states of conscious existence (verse no. 6) = 35.

[2]The product created by the interaction and numerous combinations of these thirty five Tattvas in various ratios and permutations is distinct from any one Tattva, more than one Tattvas or all the Tattvas taken together. There is no resemblance between the units that are used to build the structure and the final shape that it takes, though the structure would fundamentally be known on the basis of its constituent parts. This finished product, which is at variance from its constituent units, is in the nature of an independent Tattvas, hence it is the 36th Tattva.]

"verse no. 8 = All those things that take a birth (and therefore die or perish, and hence are mortal and non-eternal and transitory) have six inherent faults or shortcomings of perception in them.

These faults are the following—(i) That there is an 'Asti'—i.e. to be in existence. [This is a major fault because whatever that exists in this world is an illusion created by the mind just like the existence of water seen in a desert mirage, ghost in the dark, a serpent in the rope, change in the moon's surface during the lunar cycle, two or more suns when seen as an image in more than one mirror, the sun or moon being devoured by some imaginary demon during eclipses, the rising or setting of the moon or the sun, etc. There is another interpretation of the term 'existence'—it is the existence of 'duality', the conception that there are two independent entities such as the Jiva or the living creature and the Parmatma or the Supreme Being, or the conception of 'you' and 'me', or 'this' and 'that'. This is against the fundamental tenet of Vedanta which lays stress on 'non-duality' of everything which briefly states that whatever that exists is but one single non-dual Brahm revealed in that form. Therefore, the concept of 'Asti' has an erroneous, a fallacious and ill-conceived foundation. Anything founded on errors of perception or misjudgment is bound to be faulty, distorted, and away from the reality and truth.

(ii) That there is a 'Jaati'—i.e. birth. This relates to the conception that there is a birth and that things are freshly born or reborn again. [This is a fault also because of two reasons. One, if anything does not exist as asserted by the first clause, then the question of its being born or dying does not arise. And two, even if we were to treat everything as Brahm personified—because it would be difficult to deny things physically seen and witnessed—then it is forgotten that Brahm does not take a birth, for it is eternal, infinite, imperishable and the 'one without a birth'. Therefore this very conception of having a birth has no sound footing; it is faulty. It is an upshot of faulty perception of the reality of Brahm and Truth.]

(iii) That there is a 'Vardhan'—i.e. there is increase, enhancement, expansion, growth. This relates to the conception that an entity increases, enhances, grows or develops. [This is a fault because for one, 'truth' never grows and develops, it is always constant, universal, uniform and never changing; and two, 'Brahm' also does not grow or enhance or develop or in any way change because it is the ultimate Truth in creation, and 'Truth' does not change.]

(iv) That there is a 'Parinaam'—i.e. result or consequence or effect or sequel. This relates to the conception that there is a sequel, a consequence, an affect, an upshot, an outcome,

a result, a follow up or a fruit of certain deed that was done in the past. [This arises out of the fundamental error that one is the doer of anything, that therefore there is a consequence, a result or sequel of that deed—either good or bad—which cannot be avoided and must be either enjoyed or suffered. This is a fundamental error of conception because one is not a doer of anything because all deeds are done by the physical body which is not the 'self' of the person, for this 'self' is the pure consciousness called the Atma that lives as a distinct entity inside the body as its resident. Further, since there is no truth in what is seen in this world, the question of there being a birth, development and an end does not arise, and consequentially the question of anything being a Parinaam of any deed done in the past life also does not arise.]

(v) That there is a 'Kshaya/Kchaya'—i.e. decay and decline. This relates to the conception that there is a stage called the last stage when there is decay and decline. [This is an error arising out of the pervious errors because anything that is eternal, infinite, imperishable and truthful, for instance Brahm, never decays or declines, nor does anything that really does not exist, like this illusionary world, can ever decay or decline. It is all imaginary, delusory and false.]

(vi) That there is a 'Naash'—i.e. destruction and ruin. This relates to the conception that there is finally destruction or termination. [This fault is a derivative of the earlier faults.] (8).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 42 as follows—36 Tattvas (counted till verse no. 7) + 6 Tattvas (verse no. 8) = 42.]

"verse no. 9 = The six Urmis or faults of the body are the following—(i) 'Ashana' or hunger, the need to eat, and therefore the need for food (along with all the accompanying problems such as worrying about its production, safety, storage, procurement, cooking, proper digestion etc.); (ii) Pipaasa or thirst, and the desire to drink and therefore the need for liquids to quench the thirst (which create the same sort of problems that are associated with the need for food; (iii) Shoka or grief, distress and dismay (which have a profound negative impact on the overall mental, psychological and general metabolic health of the body); (iv) Moha or to have strong attractions or longing for anything or anyone, to be emotionally attached with anything, to be deluded, to be held under magical spell of anything or to be under its charm, to hallucinate as a result of these emotional faults (all of which makes a man a virtual serf of his emotions and tied down to the object of his adoration, thereby robbing him of his independence and peace, and more often than not becoming the cause of his interminable sufferings); (v) Jara or old age and its attendant decline of the body leading to its decrepit and weakened physical state when the body loses its strength, vigour and stamina, thereby becoming a burden on the person; and finally (vi) Mritu or death of the body. All these factors create an immense amount of discomfort and horrors to the person (i.e. to the Atma that is the true identity of the person) to whom this body belongs. [In other words, as long as the person continues to have the erroneous conception that this body is

Then there are six Koshas or coverings or structural features of the body. Now I shall tell you about them. [The Koshas are listed in verse no. 10 and also described in a separate appendix dealing with the concepts of Vedanta at the end of this volume.] (9).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 54 as follows—42 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 8) + 6 Urmis + 6 Koshas (of verse no. 9) = 54.]

"verse no. 10 = The Koshas (mentioned in verse no. 9 above) are the following—skin, blood, flesh, stomach or abdomen, marrow and bones. [As would be evident, these are the components of the gross body of the creature.]

The other six Tattvas relate to the natural habits and temperaments of the creature—such as Kaam (lust, passions, desires and yearnings), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness, ill-temper), Lobh (greed, rapacity), Moha (attraction, infatuations, attachments, delusions and ignorance), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness, false pride, hypocrisy and ego) and Matsarya (envy, jealousy, malice and ill-will). These are the faults associated with his natural temperament and the state of his mind. (10).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 60 as follows—54 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 9) + 6 Tattvas (of verse no. 10) = 60.]

"verse no. 11 = These six faults in a person's character (mentioned in verse no. 10) are called his natural Dushmans or enemies.

There are three types of world that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states in which the consciousness exists in this world. They are (i) Vishwa (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), (ii) Taijas (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of consciousness), and (iii) Pragya (the gross world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

Then there are three types of Gunas or characteristics qualities that are inherent in all living beings which decide his basic nature, temperament and personality traits. These are (i) Sata Guna (the best trait or virtue which is marked by auspicious values), (ii) Raja Guna (which is the medium quality marked by the worldly desires for enjoyment, development and growth), and (iii) Tama (which is the lowest and meanest quality marked by the propensity for being pervert, committing errors, making sins and doing mischief and misdeeds) (11).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 66 as follows—60 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 10) + 3 states of existence of the Jiva + 3 Gunas (of verse no. 11) = 66.]

"verse no. 12 = There are said to be three types of Karma or deeds—(i) Praarabdha—deed that is obligatory because of the cumulative effects of one's past life and the latent desires, passions and temperaments that are brought forward from it, inspiring and compelling a person to behave in a certain way and do certain deeds and take actions which his own sibling would abhor; this compulsion is obtained as an inheritance from the past, and over which one has no or least control; (ii) Aagamya—deed that would be needed to be done in the future and about which no idea can be had at the present time, but it may or may not be as result of the present or the past; and (iii) Arjit—that which is done in the present at a given point of time, and which results in the creation and accumulation of effects that would have bearing on the future.

There are five more Tattvas as follows—(i) Vachan—to promise and make vows; (ii) Aadaan—to receive and accept, to come; (iii) Gaman—to go and give; (iv) Visarjan—to distribute and disperse, to dispense and expel, to eliminate and discharge; and (v) Anand—

bliss, ecstasy, happiness and joy. [These five Tattvas are variations of the term Karma or deed because they all involve action that the body takes. It is the body of the creature that physically speaks, receives or gives, comes or goes anywhere, eliminates waste from inside it, or enjoys the pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the material world. The main Principal called the Atma, the pure consciousness that is the truthful identity of the person, is neutral and a resident of this body, and therefore distinct from it. This Atma does not actually and physically do anything, but for all practical purposes it is deemed to be morally responsible and accountable for all the deeds done by the body because it is the 'Lord' of the whole setup. Besides this, it happens only till the time the person thinks that the body is his true identity, and therefore he is deemed to be responsible and accountable for what the body does. Should he disassociate himself from the body and treat his 'self' as the Atma, he is freed from unwarranted accusations of being a doer of deeds.] (12).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 74 as follows—66 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 11) + 3 deeds + 5 Tattvas (of verse no. 12) = 74.]

"verse no. 13 = The next set of four Tattvas are the following—(i) Sankalps—to make aspirations, violations, determinations, promises and resolutions; (ii) Adhyvashya—incessant work and enterprise, to continue to do one's tasks and duties assiduously, to remain busy in doing one's work and deeds, and not shunning responsibilities, not being lazy and indolent; (iii) Avimaan—to have pride in one's deeds, abilities and qualities; and (iv) Avadhaaranaa—to have certainty of views, to determine and deduce firmly without having any doubt.

The next set of four Tattvas are the following—(i) Mudit—to be very glad, cheerful, joyous and happy; (ii) Karuna—to be kind, graceful, merciful and compassionate, to have empathy and sympathy; (iii) Maitri—to have friendly disposition; and (iv) Upeksha—to neglect and be indifferent. [These set of four Tattvas are closely related to the Tattvas listed in verse nos. 12-13.] (13).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 82 as follows—74 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 12) + 4 + 4 Tattvas (of verse no. 13) = 82.]

"verse no. 14 = The following are the divine Gods who constitute the next group of fourteen Tattvas—The patron Gods of various directions, Vayu (the Wind God), Surya (the Sun God), Pracheta (Prajapati—one of the ancient forefathers of creation), Ashwinikumars (the physicians of the Gods and the twins sons of the Son God), Agni (the Fire God), Indra (the king of Gods), Upendra (Vishnu), Mrityu (the Death God personified as Yam), Chandra (the Moon God), Brahma (the creator), Rudra (Shiva), Kshetragya (the different Gods of various realms of creation), and Ishwar (the Supreme Being; the Lord God) (14).

[Note—This brings the tally of Tattvas to 96 as follows—82 Tattvas (as counted till verse no. 13) + 14 Gods (of verse no. 14) = 96.]"

Tattva Marg—The Tattva Marg is the spiritual path that is business like and does not take one along a circuitous route to one's spiritual destination. It is a path that leads straight to one's spiritual goal. It's a philosophy that relies on to-the-point, well researched, clinically precise, empirically proven, effective and practical approach to spirituality and proven methods

for reaching the citadel of spiritual elevation that culminates in liberation and deliverance of the soul from the continuous cycle of birth and death, and ensuring its emancipation and salvation for good. It is the eclectic spiritual way which is based on correct, proven and precise spiritual knowledge and its judicious and practical application which can fine tune one's approach to the actual and profound spiritual truths and reality as opposed to apparent or assumed truths and reality which are more often misleading and like a spiritual quagmire. It is the basic and essential path that any wise, erudite and sagacious aspirant would like to follow if he does not wish to waste his precious time and energy on debating as to which is the correct and effective way for spiritual elevation and realisation of the ultimate Truth that would provide him with final liberation and deliverance from this material world of falsehoods, delusions and entrapments. It is the noble path that would liberate the soul from the cobweb of birth and death and their accompanying horrors and pains, and lead him by the hand to the high ground of enlightenment and self-realisation from where the spiritual seeker stands to see clearly and witness first hand the presence of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The Tattva Marg leads one to reach his spiritual destination which is compared to a 'lighted lamp'. This is a metaphoric way of saying that against the background of a dark and foreboding world full of miseries and sorrows, of falsehoods and delusions, of myriad doctrines and philosophies that create a web of confusions and consternations that are tantamount to an all-covering veil of darkness that engulfs the spiritual aspirant from all sides, if he is wise and erudite enough to follow the correct path called the 'Tattva Marg' steadily without allowing himself to be confused in anyway, then he becomes fortunate enough to have a divine and reassuring vision of the Lord as the lamp of hope and salvation just like a ship caught in the choppy waters of a stormy sea observes the beacon of the lighthouse. The divine vision of the light of the Lord is very reassuring; it indicates his august presence and it removes all forms of symbolic darkness that have been engulfing the spiritual traveler from all the sides, such as the darkness induced by ignorance, delusions, various worldly faults and taints etc. This light, by removing the fearsome darkness, cheers his heart and encourages him to move ahead with renewed zeal and vigour towards his chosen spiritual goal and speedily reach it. This goal is his spiritual emancipation and salvation, his liberation and deliverance from the fetters that had been shackling his self or his Atma, the pure conscious 'self', for many births and many generations. Once the light is visible at the end of the road, he races forward; previously he was moving slowly because he had to grope in the dark. This divine and sublime vision of the Lord as a lighted lamp is a sign that he has almost reached his goal, and the destination that the soul has been searching and yearning for countless generations and numerous births, is finally at hand.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 131 describes this 'Tattva Marg' and its spiritual rewards as follows—"For a person who has stepped on the spiritual path called 'Tattva Marg' to reach his spiritual destination can see (visualise) that supreme and excellent Purush (i.e. the un-manifested Supreme Being in his manifested cosmic and all-inclusive form of the Viraat Purush known as Lord Vishnu) as a lighted lamp.

What a great irony it is that the man feeds himself (by drinking milk) from the same breast (of his mother) that he presses to derive immense sensual pleasure (during sexual encounters with his partner)[1] (131).

[Note—[1]This is a remarkable observation. A man is so foolish that he forgets the reality and gets deluded by circumstances and their false charms. He forgets that the breast is provided by the Lord as a vessel or container to store the much-needed milk to feed the infant creature, and not as an instrument of deriving sexual gratification from it. The same breast is subjected to two different treatments, it assumes two opposite roles and appears to be different in two different contexts for the same man, for as a child he had fed from it and had even pressed it while suckling milk from it, while the same man does the same thing as an adult but his perception changes. There is a verse in Yagyavalkya Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 17, dealing with the very concept of how the breast of a woman should not delude a man by its illusive charm. It says—"The breast of a woman severed from her body and lying unattended in a cremation ground, or lying randomly at any other place, is fed upon by stray dogs as if they were ordinary dog-feed or lump of meat".

Thus we observe how the same thing is seen differently by three different people when viewed by them from different angles and perspectives. The child sees the breast as the pitcher filled with the life sustaining sweet milk, the elixir of life for it. The lustful man sees it as an instrument to satisfy his sensual and carnal desires. The ascetic and a renunciate monk see it is a lump of flesh lying on the gross inane body which is eaten by stray dogs.

The basic object does not change; the basic truth about the breast that it is an instrument provided by Mother Nature to feed the infant child till it is able to take care of its self remains the same, but the apparent differences of how it is treated and viewed persist. Even those who are well aware of this anatomical fact that it as much part of the female body as her anus still wish to enjoy the sensual gratification derived from this lifeless lump of flesh that is fed upon by stray dogs in the cremation ground. This is an ideal example of how a man gets deluded and is overcome by ignorance about the real sense and purpose of anything, of how he can be misguided if the same thing is seen under the wrong light. This is an indirect way of explaining what constitutes the Tattva Marg—i.e. the proper and correct way of looking at certain thing by concentrating one's attention on the basic and truthful essence of it, the underlying truth and reality behind it, instead of getting deluded and misled by its charming exteriors and superficial appearances, or by the myriad of ways it is being interpreted and described by numerous people creating a vortex of confusions that is most perplexing and mortifying for the aspirant.]

(20) The Theory of Karma (Deeds done by a creature)--

(a) The words 'Karma and Kriti' refer to the deeds done by a man and the actions taken by him. While the word 'Kriti' refers to the act of doing, accomplishments, making an effort, performing an act, the word 'Karma' refers to the work done or the deeds that are

undertaken by a man. Both these terms are closely linked with each other and cannot be separated and understood correctly. If one does any deed, he is naturally taking some action. Whereas the term 'action' applies to the physical activity, the process of doing anything, the activity itself, the term 'deed' would apply to something someone has done, a notable achievement, An action is taken to accomplish success in one's endeavour, while the deed would describe in general terms the category under which one's actions can be classified—i.e. whether the action was good and auspicious, in which case we say that his deeds were good and he is remembered for his noble deeds, or bad and inauspicious in which case we say that his deed were so bad that he has left a scar on the society.

The word 'Karma' generally refers to deeds done by a man, the actions he has taken, to act upon or implementing one's firm faith and conviction, commitment and dedication towards any entity or object which one adores, admires, honours or reveres. The word 'Kriti' in the spiritual context with its various connotations refers to, inter alia, righteous deeds and actions involving self restraint, observance of strict codes of conduct and morality, and the ability to focus and concentrate the mind upon the supreme Truth and absolute Reality or Brahm while doing all the deeds or taking all the action in detached and dispassionate manner. One should be sincere and honest when he pursues any object or make efforts to obtain success in any enterprise, whether it is in the spiritual field or in the mundane worldly realm. Firm commitment, dedication, faith and singularity of purpose are the necessary ingredients for success in any action or deed. In other words, the 'Kriti' of a man helps to determine the degree of 'Nishthaa' that he has. The way a man does anything will show how committed he is to his work—whether his heart is in it or not, whether he is doing it under duress or doing it willingly, how much faith and devotion he has in both the action as well as its consequential result or reward. Half-hearted and disinterested actions can't be hidden. That is why it is said that a 'man is known by his deeds or actions'.

The best spiritual path to be followed is not to shy away from doing the deed itself but to remain detached from it and its results. The deed is not in itself entangling but it is the notion of 'I' or 'me' that is the chief culprit. When the man thinks that 'he' has done anything, he is bound to be proud of good deeds and their results, and ashamed of bad deeds and their evil results. But this thought is erroneous in itself because of many reasons. First, a wise man knows that the deeds are done by the gross body which is not his 'self', as this 'self' is the pure consciousness known as the Atma residing in this body which is definitely different and separate from the body. Therefore the deed cannot be done by the 'me'. Second, all deeds are done in a physical gross world of material sense object that is artificial and illusive. Therefore, the deeds and their results are like the water in a mirage—artificial and illusive. Third, the results are also suffered or enjoyed by the gross body consisting of sense organs of perception and action, and not by the Atma. Thus, why should the Atma become overworked by something that does not concern it?

In brief, only as long as the person thinks that he is the 'doer' of deeds is he accused of doing it, but if he mentally remains detached and disassociated from them he is free from the

deeds and their results; he can rightly claim that he has not done anything. So, mental detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any deed whatsoever is the clue of doing the deeds but remaining free from their consequences. It is the mind that is the cause of all attachments and involvements, and if the mind is properly reined in, the rest is easy to follow.

Another way prescribed in the scriptures is to do the deeds dispassionately and as a service to the supreme Lord or Brahm. When the deeds are done for the Master, there is no question of the doer having any right over the result just like the labourer who works in the field of his master has no right on the produce of his labour. He cannot say that since I have toiled so much, the harvest is mine. This would automatically create a psychological detachment from the deed because one has no expectation of either enjoying its fruits or suffering from its evil consequences, such as an abundant harves or failure of crop in this present example.

The relationship between Karma (deeds) and Mukti (spiritual liberation)—It is said in the Upanishads and other scriptures that Mukti or Moksha or liberation and deliverance is possible by abstaining from deeds. How is it possible if one were to live in this world with a body which cannot remain without doing anything? The answer is that a wise person should not allow himself to get emotionally involved in any deed, but do them with dispassion and selfless attitude as a sacred duty offered to the Lord or the chosen deity of the aspirant. This would entail a natural indifference to the results of those deeds, which would then not affect the creature at the mental level. This would not only give peace of mind but ensure that the vicious chain of deeds, their results and their consequences, newer deeds done as a spin off from the previous deed and its consequences, and so on and so forth is broken for good. This liberates the creature from the cycle of birth and death, because basically birth is due to the necessity to undergo punishment or to enjoy the results of the deeds done in the previous life, and death is when the time of this punishment and enjoyment is over. But it is not this easy formula, because during the present life, the creature does newer deeds, and these have their own set of consequences which would necessitate a new birth. So how is this cycle broken or stopped? It is very simple—non-involvement in doing deeds in this life, so that when the past stock is exhausted, and when no new stock is accumulated, and then there would be no need to take a new birth. But now the question arises—how to remain uninvolved in deeds while one lives in this world with a body? The answer is no mental attachment in deeds; the enlightened view that the deed is being done by the body which is not the truthful identity of the person's self, which is however the Atma, the pure conscious self. This very basic understanding relieves the person from the bondage of deeds. The emphasis is in mental non-involvement, and not on actual physical non-performance of deeds, for if one has a body then it is impossible not to do anything at all with the body if one has to lead a normal life in this world. This form of existence is called 'Jivan Mukti' which is so much lauded by the scriptures. It is the form of liberation that forms the framework of final liberation and deliverance at the time of discarding of the body at the time of death, when the aspirant achieves the 'Videha Mukti' or the liberation and deliverance without the limitations and encumbrance imposed upon the Atma by the physical body.

References—The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarwasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse nos. 20-26. (v) Atharva Veda—Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse no. 10, 12; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 5-8, 11..

The Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad describes the great spiritual rewards obtainine by an aspirant by doing selfless Karma or deed/service in its Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse no. 12; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in *Brihad Aranyak* 4/4/1. The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds. The *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad*, verse no. 67 describes succinctly how Karma or deeds and their consequences can be overcome. The *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48, and Canto 4, verse no. 35 describe the relationship between the deed, the doer and the cause.

The *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad*, verse no. 67 describes succinctly how Karma or deeds and their consequences can be overcome. To quote—"When a spiritual aspirant attains this high level of enlightenment of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, when he sees the absolute, pure and flawless Brahm as being all-permeating, all-inclusive and all-encompassing, it is then that all the knots of his heart are untied, all the confusions and perplexities that keep churning his mind-intellect and heart endlessly, thereby robbing them of their inherent peace and happiness, are dispelled. [That is, all the bonds that bind a man to the artificial world and

its destructive as well as ruinous charms, all the fetters that shackle him to the deluding world and compel him to remain chained to it in the hope of possessing it and enjoying it which in turn lead him to get sucked in the vortex of birth and death—all such negative and self-destructive factors are dispensed with. The spiritual aspirant feels like a bird de-caged and is able to see the broad and vast sky not from behind the bars of the cage but from the outside. This view of the sky from outside the cage is unhindered and un-tampered by the bars of the cage. The bird watches for sometime and then takes to its wings. Similarly, the spiritual aspirant frees himself from the fetters that had been shackling him till now, sees what it means to be enlightened and have a broad vision of creation, and then finds his 'self' spiritually liberated. He develops a spiritual perspective with a sight and vision that is as vast and holistic as the surrounding space around him].

In this eclectic and exalted state of existence, all his deeds are automatically destroyed. [This is because he would realise that the deeds are done by the body and not the 'self' or the Atma, thereby absolving the latter from the consequences of the former. An ordinary man does various deeds to gain something from his efforts; he has some desires and aspirations, and makes efforts to fulfill his wishes. But an enlightened and spiritually attained man has nothing to desire; he is completely fulfilled. In other words, the need to do anything does not arise, the need to make efforts to achieve some object is not necessitated, and therefore the 'deeds' are not done. This statement that 'deeds are not done' must be understood in the correct perspective. It does not mean that the wise, self-realised and enlightened man would lie idle and waste his time sleeping—nothing is farther from the truth. What is meant here is that inspite of doing everything that comes his way with his gross physical body, an enlightened man would not get mentally and emotionally involved or attached with any of the deeds or things. His 'self', his 'spirit', would remain aloof, disinterested and detached like a neutral observer who does not participate in anything, or like a bystander lost in his thoughts watching the traffic whiz past him on a busy road without even being aware of which car or bike has gone by or even bothering to know about it.] (67)."

The *Kathrudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 13 asserts that the supreme transcendental Brahm or the quintessential spiritual Truth of creation as well as Mukti or liberation and deliverance is not possible by doing various deeds in this mortal world. To quote—"A man cannot find access to the transcendental Supreme Being by means of doing deeds (such as various religious rites and rituals) himself or by the help of sons doing things on his behalf[1], or by any other means whatsoever. Rather, he can have access to the supreme Brahm by experiencing and witnessing the latter personally by the due diligent process and guidance provided for the purpose in the scriptures (13).

[Note—[1]In other words, spiritual emancipation and salvation is not obtainable by merely doing various religious sacrifices and deeds such as making donations and charities alone in this mortal and material world in the hope that they are the only means of obtaining this ultimate goal in life. How they are done is of paramount importance. This verse should not be construed as prohibiting one from doing deeds, or that even auspicious

and righteous deeds are useless. The intention is not that at all. One must be careful how the deed is done, and for this he has to consult the scriptures which have repeatedly emphasised that the main problem with deeds is that they compulsorily produce results because of the principle of action and reaction. So the trick lies in escaping the results of the deeds done. This is possible if one is wise and enlightened enough to understand that the Atma which is his 'true self' does not do any deed and they are done by the gross body. Therefore the Atma should remain detached and unattached from both the deed and its reward, both good and bad. If this happens, it is as good as not doing deeds. There is a variation to this philosophy of doing deeds that do not create entanglements—and it is to do them selflessly and as an offering to the supreme Lord, or leaving the results for the Lord. Even as the servant cannot be accused for any doing anything if he diligently carries out the order of his master, the Atma cannot be accused of doing anything if it is a party to the decision making process. For this to happen, a wise man just deals with the day to day happenings as and when they present themselves before him, and once done he forgets about them. This is only possible if his mind is lost in deep meditation and contemplation for then it would not even register the actual physical event in the first place so there would be no scope of after effects on the sub-conscious.

The son sometimes does religious deeds such as making charities, offering oblations to the sacred fire and libations to the spirits of dead ancestors in the hope and belief that the soul of his father would find salvation and emancipation by these auspicious acts. This verse is a clear warning that it is a misconception and would not lead to the good of a person's soul. It is like the case of someone else taking medicine on behalf of some particular individual or of some other person eating food on his behalf. It is not only absurd and ridiculous but incredulous to the extreme to even imagine that the benefit would be got by the individual on whose behalf the other person is taking medicines or eating or drinking food items. Likewise, in matters of soul too one's own efforts would benefit him, and sons or anybody else cannot do it for him. In other words, this verse declares that each individual should be careful about his own conduct and should not be misled to believe that his misdeeds can be undone any good deed done by others. His welfare is in his own hands. Refer Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 6 in this context.]"

The *Sarwasaar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds as follows—

"Verse no. 6 = The way a creature interprets any given circumstance and sees any given thing creates either a sense of attraction towards them in the mind and intellect of the creature, or a sense of apprehension, fear, dislike or outright revulsion for them. In other words, when the creature feels that the given circumstance or thing would provide him with comfort and pleasure, that they would be conducive to his general well being and good, the creature gets tempted by their allurements and begins to love them, thereby showing interest in them and drawing solace and happiness in being associated with them. The mind and intellect that has been conditioned to think positively and endearingly about any given circumstance or thing in this world in the hope that they would bestow comfort, pleasure and happiness to the creature, gratifying his needs for them in this world, then such a tendency of the mind-intellect

complex is called the 'Sukha Buddhi'. [That is, when the mind thinks that the particular aspect of the world is good for the welfare and happiness of the principal, i.e. the creature, it advises the intellect accordingly, and then this intellect in its turn makes the Atma convinced that the particular thing is good for it. Even as an Emperor depends upon his ministers for feedback and advice, the Atma has to rely upon the mind and intellect to interpret and take decision in all matters pertaining to this world. This mind-intellect that perceives a sense of pleasure and happiness in anything pertaining to this world is called a pre-conditioned mind favourably disposed towards the material world and the comforts, pleasures and happiness provided by it. This notion makes the mind-intellect to be automatically favourable towards this world and be positively inclined towards its material sense objects. This tendency of the mind-intellect is classified as 'Sukha Buddhi'.]

On the contrary, when the same mind and intellect interprets a given circumstance or thing in an adverse manner as not being conducive to the general happiness and well being of the creature and harming the latter's self interest, thinking that it might cause miseries and problems for the creature, it develops a sense of natural apprehension, fear, distaste or disinterest in it, even to the extent of creating an outright sense of repugnance and hatefulness for this given circumstance or thing. This natural negative bearing of the mind towards any circumstance or thing in this world is called 'Dukha Buddhi'.

The creature is called a 'Karta' or a doer of deeds because it consciously does so many deeds and takes so many actions in order to either acquire things or create circumstances that its mind-intellect is interested in, and avoid those in which it is not interested. [Since it is the physical body that actually does the deed or carries out the action under the inspiration of the mind and intellect, so when the creature begins to erroneously identify himself with the body as being his 'true self' instead of the Atma, it is said to be the doer of deeds. Actually, a wise and erudite creature is one who realises the subtle difference between the 'true self' which is the sublime, divine, subtle and ethereal Atma, and the gross physical body which is 'non-Atma' in the sense that it does not possess the auspicious eclectic virtues that characterize the Atma. The Atma is primarily pristine pure and a neutral witness to whatever is happening around it, being unattached to anything pertaining to the artificial world, being unaffected by the sorrows or joys that buffet this body, and being totally dispassionate towards everything that concerns both. Since the Atma has no desires, it need not make any efforts to fulfill them, and therefore it need not get involved in doing any deed to accomplish success in this fulfillment. On the other hand, the body is never satisfied as its organs yearn for constant gratification. This perpetually impels the body to compulsorily perform endless deeds as its obligatory function and duty. It fears that it would be labeled as lethargic, indolent and lazy if it does not remain active and constantly involved in some or the other activity. Even when doing Yoga (mediation) when there is no visible external activity, the creature thinks that he is 'doing' Yoga. So the creature becomes a 'doer of Yoga'. But this entire notion of doing and not doing is based on the fallacious premise that the body is the 'self' of the creature instead of it being the Atma which does not do anything, whether Yoga or anything else for that matter.]

The primary cause of all notions of sorrows and miseries as well as of happiness and joys is the existence of the five sense perceptions which are the senses of hearing having its focus in the sound emanating from the outside world, the sense of feeling something when it touches the skin, the sense of sight when something with a visible and tangible form and shape is seen, the sense of taste when anything touches the tongue and titillates the taste buds, and the sense of smell when the same titillation occurs in the nose. [In other words, when the creature has once experienced and witnessed the sense of happiness and satisfaction, or has literally 'tasted' the sweetness of worldly charms, no matter how transient and sorrowful they may be in the long run, it gets virtually hooked to them much like a drunkard gets hooked to his favourite drink or a chain smoker to his favourite pot inspite of being aware of their fatal health hazards. Once trapped, the creature would break all rules in the book to get at his desired object which gave him his illusive pleasure and comfort. This obviously leads to a chain of problems and their attendant consequences.]

When the Atma, which is the true self of the creature, is enticed into falling prey to this body's illusive charms and begins to participate in the body's actions and the deeds in the hope of deriving comfort, happiness, joy, pleasure and peace from this involvement, it gets entangled in the web of delusions and begins to hallucinate. In order to acquire that illusive happiness and peace, that comfort and pleasure that remains beyond its reach, the creature plunges into doing all types of deeds and taking all sorts of actions, whether they are auspicious, righteous and noble or not. The creature does not even bother to consider the consequences of such deeds and actions because he is under the influence of great delusions and is therefore hallucinating.

This delirious situation when the Atma lives inside a gross body and thinks that the body is its true self and identity, when it begins to think that the deeds done by the body are being done by its own self, when it remains ever engrossed in these deeds and either suffering from or enjoying the consequences of such deeds, when it never attains permanent peace and satisfaction from these deeds, when it yearns for more and still more in order to gratify its natural instincts and impulses, it is said that the Atma has become a 'Jiva' or a living being with a physical gross body. This term 'Jiva' is like a title attached to the Atma when it has a gross body and perpetually unsatisfied (6)."

The *Karma Chakra* or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences—The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3 describes the cycle of deeds and their consequences upon the creature as a giant wheel called the Karma Chakra. To quote—"That supreme creator (Brahm) did the 'deed' of creating this Brahm-Chakra and then set it in motion. He watched it move, and then created a circumstance whereby the subtle conjoined the gross to result in the unfolding of this vast world. [That is why this world consists of two types of attributes or qualities—one which come under the category of subtle, and the other that come under the category of gross.]

In other words, the supreme creator first revealed his own characteristic 'Self' in the form of the pure consciousness called the cosmic Atma which was very subtle. Then he went on progressively making it grosser and grosser by slow degrees, in a step-by-step method.

Thus he created the many elements. Then he mixed them in various permutations and combinations to produce newer, more varied, and extremely fascinating array of products which become heavier by degrees and then finally resulted in the structure which we call 'creation' and which is still evolving.

Therefore, it all started from one element (Avidya—lack of truthfulness, substance and pith in what is being created, as all the creation that was created as a result of this endeavour of the creator was a mirage and not the reality), and this was followed by a chain reaction, progressively producing two elements (Dharma—righteousness, probity and propriety + Adharma—the opposite of Dharma), three elements (the three basic qualities of Sata—the high moral quality of spiritualism + Raja—the mediocre quality of worldly passions etc. + Tama—the meanest quality of sinfulness), four elements (Prakriti—nature + Mana—mind + Buddhi—intellect + and Ahankar—pride and vanity), five elements (the five Prans which are the vital winds—Pran, Apaan, Vyan, Samaan and Udaan; it also refers to the five sense perceptions—sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling), six elements (the five perceptions + Mana or mind, because it is the mind that brings effectively coordinates these five perceptions), seven elements (five perceptions + Mana or mind + Buddhi or intelligence), and eight elements (the five basic elements—sky, air, fire, water and earth + Mana or mind + Buddhi or intellect + Ahankar or pride and vanity).

The supreme creator mixed his own divine and eclectic qualities with the gross characteristics of Kaal (time, age, period and circumstance) and the subtle qualities of the inner self (such as having compassion, mercy, benevolence and magnanimity as well as desires, wishes, aspirations, hopes and expectations) to create this world. [That is why this world exhibits these basic characters because they all have been incorporated in its structure by the creator.]

The entire gross creation came into being out of this concoction.

Since this wheel came into being as a result of some deed done by this supreme creator, it was also called the Karma Chakra[1]. The creator, having thus created this wheel out of the subtlest of elements and the grossest of elements, watched fascinatingly as it rotated (3).

[Note—[1]The cycle of deeds, their consequences, and newer deeds and their fresh consequences is called the Karma Chakra or the 'Wheel of Deeds'. This cycle is referred to as a 'wheel' because it rotates around the central axle consisting of the notion of 'deed' done by the creature, and therefore this wheel has its existence only till the time the creature 'does the deeds'. As soon as the creature stops doing any deed, the wheel is dismantled because the axle breaks. But this ideal scenario is always not possible as a creature has to do one or the other deed when he lives in this world, and he cannot escape the consequences of these deeds done by him, which in turn make him do other deeds as a follow up action, and these new deeds set in motion their own set of consequences, and so the wheel goes on rotating on and on. In other words, the creature gets shackled to the wheel of deeds just like the bull or the ox that turns the water-wheel for its master throughout its life but cannot get done with it. The bull or ox dies turning the water-wheel but even after its death the wheel goes on turning, albeit some other

unfortunate animals is yoked to it.

Now, the question is 'how to stop this Wheel of Deeds even while living in this world'? The answer lies in the truthful knowledge of the self, which is the Atma, and the fact that it is the true self of the creature and that it is very distinct and independent from the body which is the entity that actually and physically does the deed. Once this delineation becomes obvious—and this is only possible by studying the Upanishads and intelligently understanding their fundamental tenets and doctrines in the correct perspective—the creature endeavours to distance himself from the deeds done by the body. This attitude removes the basic cause of all the problems, and leads to the breaking of the vicious cycle known as Karma Chakra, there by setting the creature free from his bondage.]"

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. It is preached by Lord Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Vishnu, to sage Ribhu. To quote—

"Verse no. 48 = There is a fallacious notion that there is a 'doer of deed' and there is some 'cause or reason why that deed is done'. This results in the existence of deeds. [When a man does anything, there must be a cause for doing it. The actual activity of doing certain deed arises out of this thinking. This is erroneous because the doer here is the gross physical body of the man and not his 'true self', the Atma which is merely a neutral inhabitant of this body and a mute observer. The cause arises because the man thinks that this world is true and real, and that the particular deed would help him reach his goal, and then he would enjoy its fruits. He forgets in the process that the world is an imaginary creation of the mind which has so many 'Sankalps' (refer verse no. 45 in this context) and has no substance in it just like the water in a mirage having no reality; it is imagined. The doer is not the 'self' and the cause is imaginary, so the physical deed is also not being done by the 'self' and is being done in an imaginary world of artificiality—so where is the substance and truth in it?]

Therefore, you should develop total indifference towards the deeds (as being done by some entity which is distinct from me, is being done in futility out of imaginary causes, and is being done in an equally imaginary world). This eclectic view would help you to cultivate total detachment and dispassion towards the deeds and everything associated with it (48)."

The *Niralambo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. To quote—"Verse nos. 11-12—All deeds done by the organs of action of the body are termed as 'Karma'. When the creature thinks that 'I have done a particular deed', then it is defined as the deed done by the Atma because the Atma is the truthful identity of the creature, and the word 'I' applies to it. On the other hand, if the deed is done dispassionately without the involvement of the true self, then it does not have any affect upon the Atma because the latter remains neutral, aloof and uninvolved in what the body does. The sense of ego and pride accentuated by success and its incumbent fame and powers lead the creature to get involved in deeds notwithstanding the denigrating result of such involvement upon the Atma. All deeds done under the delusion of 'I am a doer' creates the desire for enjoying the good effects or

fruits or rewards of doing these deeds. This is like a spiritual bondage for the Atma of the creature. Even religious and noble deeds—such as observance of sacraments, performance of fire sacrifices, giving of donations and making charities, doing severe Tapa (i.e. penances and austerities) etc.—done with this erroneous notion that 'I have done this deed and therefore I am entitled to enjoy its fruit or reward' make them not the proper way of doing deeds. Though they are noble and righteous in their own right, they nevertheless have a detrimental affect upon the purity of the Atma which is supposed to remain detached and disassociated from these deeds. Therefore, instead of providing liberation and deliverance, they tie the Atma down (11-12)."

The *Trishikhi Brahmin* Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. To quote it in detail—

"Verse no. 23 = The flame of truthful knowledge and genuine enlightenment is lit with the aid of diligently pursuing the principles of Yoga having eight branches. Yoga, which is a spiritual endeavour, has two main paths—Gyan Yoga and Karma Yoga, meaning the path of knowledge and the path of deeds and actions respectively [23].

[Note—The Yogchudamani and Jabal-darshan Upanishads of the Sam Veda tradition, amongst others, deal with Yoga in detail. The concept of Yoga and its wider implications are a subject matter of a number of Upanishads. Refer also to Niralambo-panishad, verse no. 23 for the 8-fold path of Yoga, and Mantriko-panishad, note to verse no. 1 for the philosophy of Deeds.] "Verse no. 24 = Oh exalted Brahmin! Now I shall describe 'Kriya Yoga' or 'Karma Yoga' (the philosophy dealing with doing deeds as a means of spiritual fulfillment) to you. A Yogi whose mind-intellect complex is free from agitations never falls and gets trapped in the net cast by false, transient and misleading material comforts and gratifications provided by the sensual objects of the world [24].

"Verse no. 25—26 = Oh exalted Brahmin! This dual Yoga (Gyan and Karma) can be understood as follows. The 'righteous path of doing deeds' is to keep the mind engaged in doing them as and when they come along, and as required or demanded by given circumstances, but should be auspicious as well as deemed fit and proper as per the righteous requirements of one's duty and obligations, subject to the proper sanction/permission of the scriptures. The 'path of acquiring truthful knowledge and enlightenment' is to keep the mind focused on spiritual enhancement and moral upliftment inspite of detractions and numerous hurdles that come along. This enables an aspirant to attain success in acquiring spiritual powers.

These two paths help the Yogi to break free from all the fetters that shackle his mind to this world [25-26]."

The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds in these words—

"Verse no. 2 = Out of these five planes of a creature's existence, it is in the Jagrat state that a creature gets involved in doing various deeds, and aspires to do such good, righteous and noble deeds that would not only help him to overcome the fear of getting into hell due to

the sinful effects of his past deeds but also help him to attain heaven. That is, it is only during the waking state that a man can use his body and its sense organs to do deeds, and these deeds decide whether he would be condemned to hell as a metaphor for his punishment, or destined for heaven where there is perpetual bliss and happiness as a reward for his righteousness and goodness. Therefore, it is only when one has any desire, even a holy and auspicious one such as to achieve heaven by doing good deeds, that he endeavours to do various deeds in order to accomplish success in fulfilling those desires. Getting 'involved in doing any deed whatsoever' that is conducive to the fulfillment of any desire, and which helps the aspirant to achieve success in it, is nevertheless deemed to be getting entangled in the web of deeds and their effects—good effects such as going to heaven, or bad effects such as going to hell (2).

[Note—This verse emphasises the point that deeds are so entrapping by their inherent nature that once a creature puts his leg in this bog, it is bound to be sucked in it; once he allows himself to come in contact with the deeds, they would invariably clasp him in a firm grip. Whether the deeds themselves are auspicious or not, whether the intention of doing them is good or otherwise, but it is impossible for a creature to remain unaffected by the basic nature of the deeds to trap and clasp everyone who comes within their reach in a vice-like grip.]

"Verse no. 3 = On the other hand, when the same creature accepts the philosophy of renunciation from deeds, he finds freedom from birth which is a result of the affects of deeds and their consequences, and the resultant bondage to this world. When he has this aspiration of finding the ultimate freedom, called Mukti, from all types of shackles pertaining to this body and the world, he would accept the path of renunciation and proceed towards his goal of emancipation and salvation of his self (3).

[Note—When a creature has any kind of hope or expectation, such as the desire to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of heaven, he would do compatible deeds that would help him achieve his goals. The creature can enjoy heaven or suffer in hell only if he has a body and he has the feeling or notion that he is enjoying or suffering. The very desire that 'I wish to go to heaven' or that 'I wish not to go to hell' necessitates the presence and involvement of a body because no one can enjoy heaven or suffer in hell if he does not have a body for these notions or feelings are limited to the gross body and its various organs. The pure consciousness neither suffers from pain of hell nor exults in the pleasures of heaven.

The true identity of a creature is his Atma and not the physical gross body. Therefore it is the Atma which is deemed to be involved in doing any deed when it is said that the creature is doing anything. So, when the wise and enlightened creatures realises that his true self called the Atma is being unnecessarily dragged into the notion of doing deeds whereas in fact it is the body which is actually doing the various deeds, and that the body is not his true identity but merely a vehicle used by his Atma for its journey in this world, a journey that has been imposed upon it as a punishment or reward of its past deeds and their cumulative affects, he withdraws himself, i.e. he distances his Atma from getting involved in any deed. This is because he has known the negative effects of this erroneous conception of the body's deeds as being treated as the deed done by the

creature and that doing auspicious and good deeds can give him freedom from his agonies—this is the very mistake that the creature had made in his previous life when he had thought that he can attain liberation by doing good deeds. So, the creature gets himself involved in doing deeds. But these deeds are so cunning that they silently and secretly ignite a desire in him to see and enjoy the rewards that accrue with good deeds. Since the body continued to de deeds till its last moment, obviously some remnants of rewards due to the creature remained pending before he died. Therefore he has to take a new birth to give effect to the rewards that were due to him but could not be awarded because of the intervention of death. The net result is that instead of getting freedom from the very cycle of birth and death that he had desired in the first place, the creature remained trapped in it. So a wise man would not like to repeat that mistake again; he would not like to get involved in anything that would push him into another round of birth and death. He would rather not get involved in doing any deed whatsoever, good or bad.

But since he has got a body, he must do something, for the body cannot remain idle by nature. The answer to this perplexing dilemma is to do deeds with total dispassion, detachment, non-involvement and with a sense of renunciation. When there is renunciation, there is no sense of belonging and attachment, no hopes and expectations, and therefore there is no question of accumulation of after affects of deeds simply because the creature does not 'actually do' anything. The actions become superficial and they do not involve the mind and the intellect and the heart; only the body is involved. And since the body is not the 'true self' there is therefore no question of the 'true self' of having to bear the consequences of the deed. This is called 'Mukti' or liberation.

On the other hand, if the creature has any hope or expectation from any deed, or if a deed is done with an expectation of any reward, such as acquiring heaven, then it would not be truthfully liberating; it would rather be entangling for the creature though he might think otherwise in his foolishness. All deeds force the Atma to assume a body because every deed has a result, and a body automatically entails a cycle of birth and subsequent death. Obviously, this is not liberation and deliverance.]"

The *Adhyatma Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. We shall quote these verses here.

"Verse no. 49 = As long as a person has the notion of having comfort, pleasure, happiness and joy, it should be regarded as being the result of his past deeds, because no rewards ever accrue if there are no actions taken or deeds done. [The very fact that a man feels a sense of happiness and joy, gets comfort from any material thing in this world, and feels that a given set of circumstances or situations provide him relief from his sufferings, it shows that the effects of his past good deeds or actions still persist to give him their rewards; otherwise he would not have had the opportunity to think that there is any situation which could have been unhappy and uncomfortable and worse for him. If he is truly self-realised and equitable, if he indeed treats all things and circumstances alike, and if he is a believer of non-duality of existence, then all circumstances and every situation would be the same for him. Besides this point, there is another reason why the very notion of having comfort and happiness presumes

the lingering effects of past deeds. It is the gross body that had done the deeds and it is it that now enjoys or suffers from any results of those deeds. The body receives impulses from the world, and it is the subtle body consisting of the mind-intellect that translates these impulses into a sense of enjoyment or suffering. The Atma, the pure conscious self of the creature, is a totally distinct entity that remains neutral and has nothing to do with the entire process. Neither does it get involved in doing deeds, nor does it enjoy or suffer from their consequences. Therefore, the very fact that such notions have their existence establishes that the deeds still continue to haunt the creature.] [49].

"Verse no. 50 = Even as the actions taken or deeds done while a man is dreaming become defunct and irrelevant when he wakes up from his dream, all the actions taken or deeds done by him with his gross body over thousands of years (literally), are got rid off or washed off once he wakes up to the truth of the great saying—'I am Brahm' [50].

[Note—As long as a person thinks that his body is his true self, he is like a man in dream who does so many deeds with his body while dreaming, but when he wakes up he finds that actually he has not been doing anything at all, and what he thought he was doing in his sleep was only a nightmare, a virtual hallucination. Deeds done in dreams are deeds done in a virtual world, a world that is imaginary and not real. The realisation that a person's true identity is Brahm (i.e. his truthful identity is not the body but the Atma, and that the latter is the microcosmic form of the macrocosmic universal Soul of the creation called Brahm who is all pervading, almighty and omniscient, is the only truth, and that everything else besides that truth is the creation of Maya (delusions, ignorance and imaginations of the mind), is akin to waking up from the stupor of sleep. It is like coming to terms with the truth that what he was thinking to be his 'self' till now was a wrong proposition. This inspires him to wake up to the fact of the real truth about his self—that his true 'self' or his 'true identity' is none else but Brahm; this is a symbolic waking up from sleep. When a man is dreaming in his sleep, he remains absolutely absorbed in that imaginary and virtual world of his dreams; he remains totally oblivious and ignorant of the reality of the situation that what his sub-conscious mind thinks to be true in those dreaming moments is actually a sham, a farce, a mirage created by the sub-conscious. This fact he realises as soon as he wakes up from the sleep, but not during the course of the dream.

Likewise, when a person realises the universal and irrefutable truth of the statement—'I am Brahm', he wakes up to the fact that all that he had been doing earlier was not truly done by him, for those deeds were actually done by the gross perishable body, while he is the pure conscious Atma which is synonymous with Brahm, and which is most subtle, sublime and divine; it is imperishable and incorruptible unlike the body. The immaculate Atma does not get involved in any worldly deeds, and consequentially is not affected by their consequences, either good or bad. The Atma, like the supreme Brahm, is indifferent to all things that are illusionary and false, all things that are gross and perishable like this imaginary and tainted world of artificiality and delusions.]

"Verse no. 51 = A realised ascetic regards himself to be unattached with/to anything or anybody in this world, and remains indifferent and dispassionate towards them like the sky[1]. As a result of this detachment, the self realised and enlightened Yati (ascetic) does not get

involved at all in any future deeds. And therefore, there would be no cause for accumulation of any results or consequences of those deeds[2]. (See verse no. 53 in this context) [51].

[Note—-[1]The Akash or sky or space is the subtlest element of the five elements of creation that remains untarnished and pure inspite of harbouring all other elements and their endless permutations and combinations that has resulted in the formation of this complex creation. The entire universe is present in the 'space of the sky'; this space or sky is fathomless and measureless. It is present everywhere but remains untouched by the characteristics of the things present in it. The night and the day, the planets and the stars, the clouds and haze, the birds and asteroids, the immense variety of colours seen in the sky—none of them actually affect the basic pureness and texture of the sky. The sun rises and sets to create day and night, but the sky is the same. The planets and the stars are born and they die, but the sky is unbothered. Whether there is dust or cloud, whether their presence lends a colourful hue or their absence makes the sky crystal clear, the sky doesn't pay any heed. Similarly, the space inside and outside a vessel or body is one, and as soon as the demarcation is removed, both the skies become indistinguishably one. This is what is meant in this verse. The true ascetic is not bothered about his surroundings; he might have to come in contact with so many types of things and people, but none of them have any affect on him much like the stars, the planets, the cloud, the dust and the birds not affecting the integral nature of the sky. He is always dispassionate, detached, disinterested and indifferent; he is unruffled, unmoved, steady and constant. He remains as crystal clear and pure as the sky.

[2]A man cannot be punished for a deed in which he has no part to play or which was not done at his behest. When an ascetic becomes enlightened and self realised, he begins to treat his Atma as his 'self' instead of his body, the latter being only a vehicle to carry the Atma in its journey through this world. He continues to do whatever is righteously expected of him and necessary for completing this journey, but does not allow himself to be emotionally, sentimentally and intellectually involved in it. Hence, he remains spiritually exonerated, as it were, for the deeds done by the body; his Atma is absolved of all consequences; it is not held liable for any of the deeds done by the body. Further, since he has overcome such traits as having desires and hopes, nothing remains unfulfilled for which he would have to strive further. In due course of time, there is an all-encompassing serenity, calmness, peace and tranquility like the surface of a placid lake high up on the mountains.]

"Verse no. 52 = Even as the Akash or the subtle space present inside the minute pores of a pitcher containing wine is not at all permanently affected by the wine's smell (because when the wine is poured out and the vessel washed clean, the smell also vanishes), this Atma too does not get permanently or irreversibly tainted or smeared or polluted or in any way affected by any of the good or bad qualities of the gross body in which it lives [52].

[Note—The body is compared here to the earthen pot in which the wine is kept, the various faults and negative traits of the body to the repulsive smell of rotten wine, and the Atma to the vacant space present in the pot's pores and the whole of its inside when the wine is poured out from it. The wine vessel does smell, but it is because of the wine and the earth element of the pot as smell is dependent on the earth element in creation.

This is proved by the fact that if we go a little higher in the air above a garden full of fragrant flowers, we can't smell their fragrance after some distance above the ground. In far reaches of the sky there is no notion of smell. Actually it is the earth element in the pot that smells, and not the space representing the sky element inside it. Once the vessel is broken, the smell vanishes; it would and should have been there if the 'space of the pot' was in any way affected by the smell of the wine because though the vessel is broken, the space is eternally present there, albeit without the physical structure of the body of the vessel, and the space (sky) would continue to smell even after the vessel is broken. Similarly, the Atma remains un-flummoxed, un-related and un-concerned with any of characteristics and qualities associated with the body. (See also verse no. 6, 7, 9, 45 and 57 in this context.)

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. This is the great paradox. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of fluffy clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds and insects of different forms, colours and genres flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from and refracted by the various invisible impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky. This is what is meant here —though the Atma or Brahma are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, they are veiled by Maya, and therefore the different flaws and taints of the latter cast their shadow and make these two immaculate and irreproachable entities appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.]

"Verse no. 53 = Even as an arrow shot skillfully at a target pierces through it and neutralizes it, the rising of the light of Gyan (truthful knowledge of reality behind the façade of illusions; truthful erudition, wisdom and enlightenment) is able to pierce through the darkness of ignorance and delusions. But it must be remembered that whatever was done prior to the vanquishing of ignorance and delusions by the arrow of knowledge had already produced certain effects, certain consequences, and the latter are not so easily destroyed by subsequent dawn of the light of knowledge and enlightenment. The knowledge of the Truth and being enlightened about it will help to stop any further cause of deeds and accumulation of the results of those deeds by removing their very basis—which is ignorance of the Truth and the Reality. However, those rewards or punishments (consequences) that had already accrued as the result of past deeds done prior to the realisation and acquisition of Gyan and its resultant vanquishing of Agyan or ignorance along with its attendant delusions and faults would have to be suffered; they cannot be simply wished away [53].

[Note—Verse no. 51 and 54 are especially explicit in this context—verse 51 clearly states that when a Yogi (ascetic) becomes as detached from everything as the sky or space which is present everywhere, surrounds everything, but still remains separate and distinct from them, it is then that he is deemed not to be involved in generation of

any fresh deeds. Therefore, there will be no question of him being responsible for the consequences of those deeds.

Now, the present verse no. 53 builds upon the idea to say that this perception of detachment comes only with Gyan or truthful wisdom and erudition, correct knowledge of the truth and reality. So in essence, both these three verses—51, 53 and 54 compliment each other.]

"Verse no. 54 = If an arrow is shot at a prey, thinking, though mistakenly, that it is a tiger, while in reality it is a cow, then the arrow cannot be stopped midway from doing an unintended harm and from killing the holy cow which is an unpardonable and a horrendous sin. Similarly, inspite of the sprouting of Gyan (truthful knowledge of reality; rising of wisdom, erudition and realisation)—which acts like this arrow—in the inner self of an aspirant, he will still have to bear with the fruits (i.e. rewards and punishments) of his past deeds. That is, he cannot expect that Gyan can absolve him and free him from the effects of deeds done by him before he had realised what is true and what is false[1] [54].

[Note—-[1]Even though the arrow was shot in good faith and intentions to kill a dangerous animal like the tiger, but the fact remains that a humble cow was killed, and this killing is an unpardonable sin. Hence, if one claims that he be forgiven for killing a cow unintentionally, it is not possible and he would have to suffer the punishment of that killing, though he would be cleaned of the sin faster and entitled to all the benefits of true atonement as compared to the case when the cow was killed intentionally and purposely.

Similarly, even when truthful Gyan arises in the individual, and if this Gyan is superficial, if it has not seeped deep down into his conscious, then mere acquaintance with knowledge pertaining to spiritualism, metaphysics and the ultimate Truth, or its awareness and even its expertise for selfish goals, will never exonerate the aspirant from having to bear the results of all that he does.

On the contrary, when 'true' and 'deep' Gyan emerges, then there would be no need for him to ask for being forgiven for his deeds and actions as well as their consequences. For in this instance, even if he has to suffer because of his deeds and actions done by his gross body, he would have realised that his 'pure and true self', the consciousness that resides in the body and which is his actual identity, will always remain exonerated and untouched by these sufferings simply because his Atma was not involved in any of the deeds and the sufferings are undergone by the body, as the Atma is eternally blissful and happy. This is only possible with sincere and truthful enlightenment and self realisation. If a person says that he is suffering because of his deeds, then surely he has not understood the meaning of his 'true self, the Atma' which is pure and blissful. This is because it is the body that suffers the consequences of past deeds, and since the wise man has understood that the body is not 'he', he remains stoic and calm and watches the sufferance like a neutral observer.

Another way of saying this is that when he stays in a perpetual state of Samadhi of self realisation, nothing external would disturb him. He would then indeed become 'Jivan Mukta' as described previously.]

"Verse no. 55 = 'I do not decay as I am imperishable and eternal'. A wise and enlightened person who becomes aware of this fact, who has firm belief, faith and conviction in it, who adores this universality of this truth, such a person becomes firmly rooted in his immaculate and irreproachable Atma. [That is, he recognises the irrefutable fact that his true self is his pure conscious Atma and not his gross body, simply because these two criterions—no decay and eternity—are not applicable to the body.]

Say then, how can he ever imagine of having done any deeds done in the past life and their accumulative consequences. [This is because the word 'eternal' precludes the assumption of a presence of past and future lives. As eternal life does not end, so the question of any past life in which a particular set of deeds were done and a future life when their results would bear fruit does not arise. Aside of this, this enlightened man distances himself from the gross body which is perishable and subject to suffering, and which had done the deed in the first place and which would therefore have to bear its results. Again, since the 'true self' is the Atma and not the body, there is no question of an innocent Atma being punished for the deeds of the body.] [55]

"Verse no. 56 = The deeds and their fruits fructify only when one thinks that the body belongs to him, or that it is 'his' body; or when he begins to identify himself with the body. But, it is not desirable to treat the gross and perishable body as belonging to one's self; or even that the body is the representative of the self.

Hence, one should wisely discard the erroneous notion of the body being one's true identity; or even that the body belongs to one's own self. This wisdom will automatically erase all causes for getting perturbed by deeds and their consequences, good or bad (because, as explained in verse no. 55 above, it is the body that does the deeds and not the Atma). [56].

"Verse no. 57-58 = This misconception or erroneous belief that one develops or conjures up about his body (as the latter being one's true identity and as belonging to him), is the basic and primary cause of all imaginations pertaining to the past deeds and their good or bad consequences. Say, whatever that is imagined, or that is founded on a wrong premise, how can it be ever true? How can false perceptions or false allegations decide the truthfulness of anything?

That which is not true, how can ever have a 'birth' or origin, and how can anything that is not born ever decay or die or come to ruin and get destroyed? And as a natural corollary, that which is false or non-existent, how can it do or not do any deeds and take any actions? Therefore, the question of consequences and sufferings or enjoyments does not arise. [57-58].

[Note—Truth is everlasting; it is eternal and universal; it is not subject to any decay or destruction or change or tampering with in any way. Since the body decays and dies one day, it is obviously not eternal, and therefore it is not the 'truth'. Then how can it do any deed? It does not actually, because this whole world itself is an imagination of the mind; it is artificial and illusionary. When the mind shuts down, the world and the body cease to exist. To illustrate the point, when we are deeply concentrated on anything that

interests us very much and our mind and intellect are busy with it, we just don't 'register' other happenings even in our close proximity, except those that directly impinge on the subject upon which we are focused at the present. Similarly, a sleeping man forgets all about his bodily agonies or physical worries pertaining to the external world while he is soundly asleep. That is why doctors prescribe sleeping pills for patients who are gravely sick. How can a sleeping man do anything? This same analogy applies here. How can a man who has withdrawn himself from the external world and is focused internally ever be blamed for doing a deed about which he is totally unaware of. Another good example would be a man 'sleep walking'. It is established that such a man can do incredulous tasks in this state which he would shudder to even think of doing under normal state; he even solves highly complicated questions which he wouldn't have done while awake, or he would even commit murder. When he wakes up the next day, he is astonished at what he is credited with or accused of doing. Say, is it justified to punish such a man for any wrong doing, or rewarded for any success in this circumstance? Obviously not, but for all practical purposes he is regarded as the one who has done that deed or taken that action!]

"Verse no. 59 = If Agyan (lack of correct knowledge and ignorance about the reality of this body and the world) is completely eliminated, and its place is taken over by Gyan (truthful knowledge of the factual position), say how can then the body be said to have an existence? Doubting the falsehood of the body and the deceptive, illusionary nature of the world with which the body interacts is possible only with people with a low level of intellect and wisdom[1]. [59].

[Note—[1]It is like a hallucinating mind which sees water in a parched desert which is actually due to the effect of heat on sand. Although a man might know this basic natural phenomenon he still falls prey to it and runs behind it, only to die of thirst. So we see the effect of Maya in practical terms. If a man does not allow his discriminatory intellect to decide what is true and what is false by relying upon the preaching of the scriptures as well as of the wise sages and seers, and instead allows all sorts of absurd and confusing ideas and precepts to cloud his mind and give rise to doubts and perplexities of all kinds, then that man has the same fate as the man who sees an oasis in a desert due to the effects of mirage. No one else is to blame for his misfortunes; it is himself who is responsible.]

"Verse no. 60 = When the scriptures talk about 'Prarabdh' which refers to the deeds done in the past and their consequences that are to be suffered in the present, they intend to teach the truth to those who are ignorant about the reality and who are extroverts[1] [60].

[Note—-[1]The scriptures teach them that the sorrows, sufferings and pains which afflict them in this life are the results of the deeds done by them in the past. So they must be aware that whatever they are doing in this life would have to be borne by them themselves and no body else. This serves two purposes:—First, since the person is already agonised and suffering, he will shun from doing unrighteous things now in present in order to avoid suffering later on as a repeat of his present predicament; this fear instills in him a desire to do good things and avoid sinful deeds. The second purpose is this—if he is an intelligent and wise man, he tries to find out how it is possible to avoid

or limit or alleviate the sufferings caused as a result of his past deeds. It is then the teaching of this and other Upanishads come to his help. He is inspired to walk on the path of self realisation and enlightened wisdom. The person learns that his true self is not the gross and perishable body, but an eternal irreproachable entity called the Atma; that the Atma is pure and has innumerable sublime virtues, and it is unaffected by the deeds done by the body; that the world which he has been regarding hitherto as true is indeed false. Therefore, the horrendous sorrows, agonies and distresses that he thinks he is suffering from are actually suffered by the body, which is anyway a storehouse of agonies and pains. It is not 'him' who suffers because he is the Atma, which is blissful and eternal, divine and ethereal.

Further, it is futile to pursue this world endlessly and cause one's self endless agitations, sufferings and bewilderments unnecessarily. He learns the concepts of renunciation, detachment, dispassion and indifference. He understands the importance of studying the scriptures with faith and concentration. He realises the usefulness of such tools as Yoga and Dhyan (meditation, contemplation), Samadhi (a perpetual state of being in Yoga and Dhyan) as means of finding liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation. His present precarious condition acts as a catalyst in this direction; he becomes a devoted seeker of 'truthful' peace, tranquility and happiness. He realises that it is indeed possible to be blissful even while living a normal life in this world. He overcomes the impulses of the mind, which in any case is the epicenter of all his imaginary problems.]

The *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda describes the effects of Karma in its Canto 4, Brahman 3, verse no. 33 as follows—"The state of existence in which a man has an able body which is healthy and robust (i.e. he is not physically handicapped), possesses all worldly material comfort and pleasures, is regarded with esteem amongst his peers, and is the Lord (king; master; owner) of all that he surveys—that condition gives him an immense sense of achievement, satisfaction, contentedness and happiness which are tantamount to obtaining supreme bliss called 'Paramanand'. [That is, such a man is most fortunate and he wishes nothing more for he has what can be had in this material world.]

The Pittars (i.e. the spirits of dead ancestors) who have attained an exalted abode where revered spirits which are worthy of worship and adoration live, have this happiness and contentedness, or the bliss which is hundred times more than that possessed by a man on this earth.

The Gandharvas (i.e. a form of semi Gods who are superior in the heavenly hierarchy to the Pittars) have it hundred times more than what the Pittars have.

A person obtains the exalted stature of heavenly Gods by the virtue of excellent deeds done by him in this world. Such Gods are known as 'Karma Devtas'. (Refer Canto 4, Brahman 5, verse no. 6.) Hence, those Gods who are called Karma Devtas and who have done auspicious and noble deeds, derive this Anand (i.e. happiness, joy, bliss, comfort, beatitude and felicity) which is equivalent to hundred times more than that which is possessed by the Gandharvas. [In other words, doing good deeds is a provider of great beatitude and felicity to the soul of a person.]

The 'primary Gods' who are eternal and imperishable, who were created at the time of creation and who do not depend upon attaining the exalted stature of Godhood by the virtue of deeds done by them (such as Indra, Fire God, Water God, Wind God etc.), have this Anand which is hundred times more than that which is possessed by the Gods who have attained the stature of Godhood by the virtue of deeds done by them and are therefore known as the 'Karma Devtas'.

Wise, scholarly, selfless and pious people who are well versed and learned in the Vedas (i.e. those who are enlightened and self realised) also possess this Anand which is equivalent to the one possessed by these 'primary Gods'.

The Anand prevailing in the abode of Prajapati (the guardian of creation; here meaning Brahma, the creator and patriarch of creation) is equivalent to a hundred Anands possessed and enjoyed by the Gods who are eternal and possessed of mystical powers. This Anand of Prajapati is also possessed by those people who perform fire sacrifices (called Yagyas), who are free from all kinds of desires and passions, and who are sinless and faultless.

Anand equivalent to hundred times of that present in the abode of Prajapati is present in the Brahm Loka or the abode of the supreme, transcendental Brahm. [This is also called 'Satya Loka' or the abode where the eternal Truth resides.] This Anand is also possessed by exalted people who are well versed and deeply steeped in the Vedas, do religious sacrifices and observe sacraments, and are pious, learned, holy and free from all kinds of passions and desires'.

Yagyavalkya continued with his discourse—'Oh king! This is known as 'Parmanand', or the beatitude and felicity that are supreme, sublime, divine, eclectic and ethereal in nature. It is also a stature where a person is said to be in Brahm Loka, i.e. and existence which is equivalent to being in the haloed precincts of the supreme Brahm where there is nothing but supreme bliss[1]'.

Janak was very pleased. He said, 'Oh sage! I donate one thousand cows or gold coins to you. Please continue with your discourse leading to my emancipation and salvation, known as Moksha'.

Hearing his earnest request, sage Yagyavalkya felt a little afraid, thinking that this wise, self-realised, erudite, enlightened and scholarly king would not relent unless his questions are fully answered, or until he is absolutely satisfied with them. And it does not seem easy to answer him or satisfy him fully (33).

[Note—[1]It is to be noted that those who diligently pursue a noble, auspicious and righteous way of life enjoy bliss and happiness that are enjoyable in the most highest of places in the spiritual realm—such as the abode of Brahma, the creator, and the abode of the supreme creator known as Brahm, the transcendental Supreme Being. This verse is meant to inspire people that if they wish to enjoy supreme beatitude and felicity prevailing in the highest of heaven here on this earth itself while living and enjoying the pleasures and comforts of the world at the same time, then the way is to lead a life that is sanctioned by the scriptures and is hallmarked by qualities and grand virtues that come under the

all-round purview of nobility, morality, ethics, probity, auspiciousness and righteousness. This observation that those who are pious, holy, followers of religious tenets, learned in the scriptures, selfless, devoid of all worldly yearnings, passions and desires, having no worldly hopes and expectations, are equivalent to the exalted Gods, to the creator Brahma, and to the supreme Brahm himself, is very significant. This shows that supreme beatitude and felicity is obtainable while a man is alive here on this earth itself; there is no need to search for such beatitude and felicity in the heaven after death if a man can reach that noble and exalted stature as defined and described in the Upanishads while he is still alive. If he is enlightened enough to realise what actually emancipation and salvation imply, he can enjoy their benefits right here on this earth while he is living, and for such an enlightened man, freedom from this world acquires a sublime and ethereal meaning. He can have a body, do the deeds of the world and behave normally inspite of being fully liberated and delivered from the fetters that shackle an ordinary deluded man who is attached to this deluding and artificial world because he is ignorant of the reality. This is called 'Videha Mukti'.]"

The concept of Kriti or Karma has also been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, Canto 7, section 21.

The Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 5-8, 11 describe how one can maintain his spiritual dispassionate attitude inspite of doing deeds (Karma) in this world as follows—

"verse no. 5 = 'A-Sansakta' person is one who does deeds selflessly without any kind of emotional and mental involvement in either doing them or in their results. He does not feel glad that he has done some noble work selflessly; he does not develop any sense of pride in such deeds. He also does not feel obliged to do anything, and neither feels grateful or satisfied at having done it. Such a person is said to be a true renunciate and truly dispassionate towards deeds (5).

"Verse no. 6 = A person becomes aware of all deeds and their fruits or results only through the medium of the mind and the intellect. Hence, a man who can disassociate his mind from involvement with deeds is said to be 'A-Sansakta'—one who is not involved in doing deeds and not attached to or affected by its results.

[It is the mind that tells a man that he is doing certain thing, and it is the intellect that helps him to predict its results. For instance, when a man picks up something not belonging to him, it is his mind that tells him that the deed that he is doing is tantamount to stealing, and it is a sinful act. But suppose the mind is programmed to think that all things belong to the society as a whole and a man has the right to pick up what is needed by him then the same deed of picking up the thing needed would cease to be a sinful act. In another instance, suppose the mind is engaged in some thoughts and the man picks up something, we say that he has done so 'absent-mindedly', or without the involvement of the mind. In this case, the element of the deed being sinful or not does not arise because the man is just not aware of the significance of

what he is doing. He is doing it mechanically as if by habit.] (6).

"Verse no. 7 = A person who does deeds without being overly worried about their results is said to be unattached to the deeds. Such a person can do the deed well (because he would be able to concentrate his efforts on the task at hand rather than getting nervous and restless about the unseen future) (7).

"Verse no. 8 = Such a person (i.e. a person who is described as being 'A-Sakta', i.e. one who is unattached) is not infatuated with anything, has no worry of any kind (does not think about anything, hence remains free from all sorts of worries), has no special desire or worries about doing or not doing anything (and does deeds as and when they present themselves to him for being done), and is not bothered or worried about either the need for going anywhere or the consequences of not going. Such a man is exemplarily neutral and indifferent to all circumstances and situations that prevail around him; none of them ever ruffle him and disturb his mind (8).

"Verse no. 11 =Or it can be said that such a person who abandons all involvement in all deeds and actions related to the body and the world finds true peace and tranquility; he becomes calm and poised. This eclectic virtue is his asset; it characterizes him.

Such a realised person remains established in the Atma which is like a glittering gem, and he shines in its illumination; he exults in its divine charms and virtues.

[That is, a self-realised man who has experienced the glory of the pure consciousness residing in his inner-self develops a natural glow of divinity around him like the halo seen around the lighted flame of a lamp. This flame would give the best light if it is not disturbed by breeze, even the gentlest of waft of air. Similarly, a man who is not disturbed in any way whatsoever would be able to remain fully concentrated on the Atma and draw on its nectar of bliss and ecstasy like the bee drinking nectar from the flower of its choice remaining oblivious of its surroundings. This would show in his cheerful countenance and the glowing halo of spirituality, holiness and divinity that effuses from his enlightened inner-self and surrounds him from all sides.] (11).

(b) The **five Noble Deeds**—The five Noble Deeds or the sanctified 'five auspicious and great sacrifices or deeds' that every householder is supposed to do are also classified as the Panch Mahayagya. They are the following—(a) Brahma Yagya (ब्रह्म यज्ञ) —study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm, (b) Deva Yagya (देव यज्ञ) —the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them, (c) Pitri Ygaya (पितृ यज्ञ) —paying homage to the spirit of dead ancestors, offering oblations to them and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls, (d) Service to mankind called 'Jiva Yagya' (जीव यज्ञ), and (e) Bhut Yagya (भूत यज्ञ) —service to all the creatures including animals, insects, plants etc., such as giving them food, shelter and protection, i.e. taking care of them. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramo-panishad, verse no. 3.

(c) The **3 Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done** by him are referred to in *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, 4/7 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as follows—

(1) the path that goes to the heaven where the Gods live, (2) the path that leads to the world of spirits, and (3) the path which leads to the world of mortal creature on this earth.

Other references:--These paths have been elaborately described elsewhere also in Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; and Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2, right up to Canto 2, Valli 3 of this Upanishad.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1.

(d) The **2 types of Karmas or deeds**--The *Mundak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Mundak 1, section 2, verse no. 10 describes two types of 'Karmas' or deeds—viz. 'Ishta Karma' and 'Purta Karma'. Let us examine them—"There are people who do fire sacrifice expressly with the intention of fulfilling certain worldly desires and aspirations. They are immensely stupid and fools of the highest order who think that there is nothing better or higher in the this life than doing the two types of Karmas (deeds)—viz. the 'Ishta Karma' which refers to the performance of rituals during the formal fire sacrifice with the specific purpose of fulfillment of certain desires, and the 'Purta Karma' which refers to such deeds as constructing wells, ponds and other such memorial landmarks to mark the successful completion of the fire sacrifice and to commemorate its performance.

These people are so ignorant that they regard the worldly rewards obtained by doing the fire sacrifice successfully as better than and superior to the eclectic reward that should be obtained by doing a fire sacrifice, which is to obtain an access to the higher heaven (or to the exalted state of spiritual liberation and deliverance from this cycle of worldly birth and death). Such people take birth repeatedly in this world or even are demoted to a lower form of life than the one they presently occupy (10).

(e) The **Path of Selfless Karma**--The Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad describes the great spiritual rewards obtainine by an aspirant by doing selfless Karma or deed/service in its Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse no. 12; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1.

Now let us see what this Upanishad says on this subject:—

"Mundak (Canto) 1, section 2, verse no. 12 = Realising that the world and its attendant rewards (such as material comforts, pleasures, happiness and joys, as well as fame, name, lordship, power and authority) that are obtained by doing Karma (literally meaning doing deeds, but here referring to the doing of fire sacrifices with the aim of obtaining worldly rewards or gains) is transient and perishable, a wise, self realised and enlightened Brahmin, i.e. such a learned man who has this wisdom and foresight, inculcates or develops a natural sense of deep renunciation and detachment from them. He realises the futility of such exercises that do not give permanent happiness or rewards.

Since it is not possible to attain eternity and imperishability by simply doing Karma (which is the performance of rituals and fire sacrifices), such wise men (who have understood

this reality and are eager for finding the truthful way that would give permanent spiritual rewards) approach some learned and enlightened Guru (a moral preceptor, teacher and guide) who is not only well-versed in the truth of Brahm as enshrined in the Vedas but is also a firm believer in this 'truth' known as Brahm and is a practitioner of this 'truth'. It is only he who can show the spiritual aspirant the correct path leading to Brahm and teach him about the supreme knowledge of Brahm (12)."

"Mundak (Canto) 3, section 1, verse no. 6 = It is the 'truth' that alone wins, and not 'falsehood'. The path in which the exalted Gods move is marked by 'truth'. [That is, it is the 'truth' that is the characteristic feature of all the auspicious and noble virtues that give glory to the creature. The Gods personify these virtues and the path of truth is what they follow. Therefore, if someone follows the path of complete 'truth' he is no less exalted than any of the Gods.]

By following this path of 'truth', wise and selfless sages and seers reach that exalted abode or attain that auspicious stature which is equivalent to having reached the holy abode of the Supreme Being who is the best example of 'truth'. Indeed, the Supreme Being (Brahm) is the Absolute Truth personified (6)."

"Mundak (Canto) 3, section 2, verse no. 1 = A wise, enlightened and self realised aspirant is able to know about that majestic and splendorous Brahm who is supreme and transcendental, who is the only foundation and the universal basis of the entire creation, and who pervades throughout it uniformly.

The spiritual aspirant who worships and serves this Brahm selflessly, without expecting anything in return, is indeed able to break free this seemingly endless cycle of birth and death (1)."

(21) Akash (The Sky element and its subtlety)--

(a) The sky or space is the subtlest of the five elements—viz. earth, water, fire, wind/air, space/sky. It pervades everywhere but is uncorrupt, unpolluted and faultless in all respects. The blemishes, faults, vices, evils, sins, corruptions, misdemeanors and all sorts of digressions present in the world are like suspended dust particles, smoke, moisture, clouds, the numerous other things such as the various birds and the celestial bodies high up in the sky which create an illusion of a sky that is spotted or dotted or polluted or coloured or overcast with these uncountable objects that are extraneous to the sky, that are not integral to it but nevertheless appear to be a part of the sky. The sky has nothing to do with them; it remains absolutely unconcerned with and untainted by them, for once they are removed from the scene the sky is uniform and spotless from one end of the horizon to the other. This example is very practical and can be observed by anyone. That is why 'sky' is used as a metaphor to describe anything that remains free from the influences of those things that appear to be an integral part of it but are in actual fact not related with it by even any remote chance.

The sky has the opposite types of characteristics present in it. For example, the space of the vast cosmos has no form but the space inside a bottle or a pot takes the shape of the bottle or the pot respectively. Similarly, the vast sky in its basic and truthful form is spotless and

without any colours, but it appears to be spotted with so many stars and specs of clouds and smoke of different colours as well as with birds of different forms, colours and shapes flying here and there. The colour of the sky during the evening or morning hours present a canvas of so many colours which appear to be real, but they are obviously a reflection of the colours of the light of the sun as reflected from the various impurities present in the otherwise spotless sky.

This is what is meant here—though the Atma or Brahm are inherently and basically pristine pure and clean, but when they come in contact with this world, the different flaws and faults of the latter cast their shadow and make them appear to have some or the other kind of spots in them.

The sky has such grand and majestic attributes as being vast, measureless, uniform, immutable, spotless, clean, colourless, calm, all-pervading, all-encompassing etc. The sky is the measurement of Brahm in the sense that if it was ever possible to measure the length, breadth and depth of the sky, it would then have been possible to measure Brahm. But that is not at all the case. The calmness of the higher reaches of the sky is experienced by Para gliders and can even be witnessed on top of mountains which are high above the ground and located somewhere in the space around the earth, symbolised by the sky, where there is an eerie silence. The sky has no colours of its own; whatever colours that we see are actually the scattered sunlight.

Everything that exits does so in any one of these spaces. Every nook and corner where there is no solid or liquid is filled with space or 'Akash', which is a synonym of sky. It is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. That is, these three forms of the skies, viz. the outer, the inner and that which is present inside the heart, are all the same; there is no distinction or demarcation or boundary or fundamental difference between any two skies. The apparent boundary or limitation imposed on the sky by the physical body or the membrane of the heart is only deceptive in nature. Once a person dies, for example, his body perishes, and the space present inside the heart merges indistinguishably with the space present inside the body when the body is cremated or decays when buried, and they together merge with the vast space present outside the body.

The 'sky', which was originally conceived as something that was 'void' or 'nothing', gets filled with 'air', simply because void can't exist, and the creation which came into being in this void needed some base for its origin and coming into being. The molecules or atoms of air are in a state of continues agitation and flux; they collide with each other, they form a chain of molecules which give rise to different layers or strata of air which extend from the surface of this earth to the stratosphere. This continuous turmoil produces 'sound'. Various physical and chemical processes come into play, producing gases of varying density and characteristic features. Air has particle of dust and different gases, which produce the perception of touch. Friction of the various molecules present in the air produces static electricity which is observed as a scintillating display of atmospheric discharge of electrically charged particles in the sky often observed at the poles. This sparkle of static electric discharge is synonymous with 'fire'. Perhaps the Upanishadic sage got this brilliant idea when he observed a meteor shower during the night.

The two elementary gases hydrogen and oxygen combine to form the molecule H_2O commonly known as 'water'. With all these essential ingredients in place, the solidifying and cooling down process of nature starts its effect and produces soil and rocks which are symbolised by the 'earth' element. Then gravity and magnetic forces come into play, giving density, gravity and grossness, indicative of the grossness or heaviness of not only the earth but also of the air around it. Previously, before gravity and other forces of nature came into play, this air was subtle and very light; it spread universally and uniformly to all the corners of the cosmos. But with the gradual formation of different celestial bodies from the primordial cosmic gases, each having its own gravity and other natural physical and chemical forces, the air was pulled or sucked in, leaving the rest of the space beyond the reach of these celestial bodies into a big void.

The sky is pregnant with a wide variety of impurities. It is full of celestial bodies besides cosmic debris. It has the burning furnace of the sun as well as the cool pitcher of nectar symbolised by the moon. The black clouds of a storm with its stabs of ferocious lightening coexist with white fluffy clouds floating lazily across the calm sky. There are birds of prey and there are harmless kites flying in it. There is the polluted haze of the city as is the pristine clear atmosphere of a village and the mountain. There is the brightness of the day and the foreboding darkness of the night. But the wonder is that none of these really affect the sky at all—it remains clear and untainted in its basic nature and form. All these things cited here are extraneous to the fundamental nature and characteristic of the sky. The sky treats all of them with the same magnanimity and kindness. Similarly, a wise man treats all the creatures with whom he has to interact in this world with the same equanimity and fortitude as the sky.

The sky has a unique quality—it harbours the entire creation in its bosom as nothing that exist lies outside the outer periphery of the sky, but still it remains completely detached from each and every thing present inside it. The sky remains unaffected, uninfluenced, unattached with and untainted by anything that it harbours or shelters. Whatever visual attributes that one sees in the sky, such as its blue or azure haze, the changing colours at different times of the day, are only optical illusions created by various factors of Nature. Even the clouds or the sun in the day time and the stars and the moon in the night do not effect the neutral nature of the sky because while the sun is there the sky appears to be bright and sunny, and when the moon rises the same sky assumes the colour of the moonlight with no indication that it was so bright earlier. The overcast sky with dark clouds becomes crystal clear when the clouds go away, and the darkness of the night sky dotted with umpteen numbers of stars can give no indication that it would be brightly lit during the day with no trace of any single star. The plumes of pungent smoke being belched into the sky by factories and fires do not effect the bland and neutral form of the sky, for the sky absorbs them all with great equanimity and fortitude without being affected by them at all.

Everything in existence needs the sky to develop and grow. The fire needs space representing the sky to burn, the air needs it to flow, the earth needs it to remain in its place and move around the sun which in turn regulates the seasons and other environmental factors, the

plants need it for their growth and development as is proved by the fact that they become stunted and die in the want of space to grow and spread their branches, the creature needs it to breathe, stand and grow, and so on and so forth. The air can be sucked out from an enclosed space to create a vacuum, but the 'sky' would still be there. The world would die and go into oblivion along with all its components, including the other four elements (earth, fire, water and air) at the time of conclusion of creation, but the sky would still be there; in fact it is in the vast bottomless pit of the sky that the creation would vanish then. And when the time comes for the emergence of the new creation, it would do so in the bowl of the sky. Nothing exists beyond the sky.

The incorruptible and untainted nature of the sky has been explicitly endorsed in Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 24 by Lord Varaaha, the Boar incarnation of Lord Vishnu, himself.

From the metaphysical angle, Brahm and sky are often regarded as being analogous because they exhibit almost identical properties and attributes—such as being fathomless, vast, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, all-encompassing, incorruptible and untainted etc.

According to Vedanta, the concept of the sky or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are five subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or Koshas present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'.These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intelluctual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Ref.— Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

According to metaphysical concepts, there are ten subtle skies. They are the following:— (1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastry, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash— the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash— the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash— the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash— the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-

galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

Taittiriyo-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Valli 3, Anuvak 6 says that Brahm and the extreme bliss obtained by Brahm-realisation are like the sky. This is because both Brahm and Sky have similar unique virtues of being, inter alia, astoundingly vast, measureless and fathomless, being mystically all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive and omnipresent, being neutral and indifferent to all objects with numerous taints that are present in them because they are the habitat of the entire creation, and the irrefutable fact that they are pristine pure, absolutely incorruptible, extremely subtle and most sublime.

Paingalo-panishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, canto 4, verse nos.19-20 states that Brahm is like Akash and how the realised ascetic becomes one with the supreme Soul upon his death by citing the instance of the 'Ghata-kash'.

It says—"A truly realised and enlightened person called a Gyani dissolves himself and merges with the supreme transcendental entity (Brahm) wherever and however he dies because that supreme entity is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent like the sky (verse no. 19).

[Note—This is because for a true Gyani his body is not his true self but it his Atma or pure consciousness which is another form of the supreme entity and has the same set of characteristics that that entity, known as Brahm, possesses. When such a man dies, he, as his Atma, rides upon the Pran or the vital winds present inside his body and simply leave the latter and makes its exit form it just like a serpent leaving its old cuticle and effortlessly coming out of it.

Another interpretation is this—When such a wise man dies, then he simply discards his gross physical body. The sky or space present inside the body and the one outside it is one uniform and inseparable element; it is the artificial boundary of the sac-like body that has created an artificial division between the two. So when this artificial demarcation is removed, it is but natural that the two skies become one. Further, a wise man is expected to know that Brahm and sky are synonymously treated because the former has all the attributes of the latter—it is immutable, immanent, omnipresent, all-pervading, pure and untainted, vast and fathomless, infinite and eternal. The air fills the sky and the second element after the sky that is nearest analogue for Brahm, for it is the air the sound called the cosmic Naad or the divine ethereal sound of cosmic music of creation that made its presence felt before the visible creation came into being. Pran or the 'vital spark of life' is a name given to the air element present inside the creature that gives the body its much needed life and vitality.

Therefore, when he dies, his Pran simply coalesces with the air present outside his body, and his Atma present in the subtle sky of the heart, known as the Hridya-akash, simply merges with the supreme all-pervading Atma present in the sky outside the body because the limiting and segregating boundary of the body has now been removed.]

Even as the limited space present inside the mud pot is called 'Ghata-kash' just to identify it for hypothetical purposes and it becomes one with the space outside when the pot is broken, because it is essentially no different from the vast and fathomless sky present outside the pot, the wise Yogi (ascetic or hermit) who has become truly enlightened and acquires the truthful knowledge of the reality, is able to access that supreme, immutable and infinite state of existence characterised by being without any form or shape, and which has or does not need any support for itself. This state is called 'Gyan Loka' or the abode marked by the state of existence where there is truthful awareness of reality, where there is truthful knowledge, where there is erudition and wisdom, where there is the light of self-realisation, and which is infinite, formless and all-pervading as the sky. Such an abode symbolises a treasury of Gyan, and hence it is called a Gyan Loka, and its inhabitant is Brahm who is Gyan personified (verse no. 20)."

According to some Upanishads, there are five subtle divisions of the sky as follows— The sky is the subtlest of the five elements (the others being air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth) in creation. Basically sky in indivisible and uniform, but for the purpose of study it has been hypothetically divided into five components or sections. These divisions of the physical sky are based upon the different forms it appears in with respect to an observer on earth. These divisions are then used to draw parallel with various metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the subtle differences between these concepts clearly and make them comprehensible. These hypothetical divisions are therefore used as metaphors for the purpose of study and comprehension, and not to suggest that the sky can be actually divided.

Now, technically the Akash is the first form of the sky just above the surface of the earth, the sky which is infinite, fathomless, measureless and eternal, the sky which appears bright during the day time as if it has its own illumination radiating from it, the sky which is dotted by so many things that are extraneous to it but appear to be an integral part of it, the sky which is there but cannot be touched, felt, smelled and tasted but only witnessed, but technically not 'seen' because something that is vacant cannot be seen had it not been for the impurities present in it, the sky which appears to have a vide variety of colours like a multi-coloured canvas but is fundamentally colourless, and the sky which is fundamentally pure and uncorrupt and untainted by any of these things. Therefore, this word 'Akash' is a hypothetical division of the immutable sky which is used as a metaphor to describe some aspect of metaphysics.

The second division of the sky is the Paramakash which is the sky seen during the night time. This portion of the sky is dotted by stars and is not totally dark because of the light reflected from the twinkling of the stars as well as the presence of the moon, the reflected light from the earth's lighted side and other celestial bodies that reflect sun's light.

The third division of the sky is the Mahakash which is the greater sky just like we have a city and its outer suburban out lying areas called the greater city area. This sky is the vast

space beyond the solar system, and stretches into the deep recesses of the cosmos, and it includes the inter-galactic space. Obviously this is like hell where there is no trace of life and if any one goes there, even hypothetically, then he just gets lost to humanity. It sure is burning with hellish fire of cosmic explosions where new stars are continuously being born and destroyed, where new galaxies are formed and old ones get annihilated, where suns explode into black holes and supernovas create immense cauldrons of unimaginable heat and energy.

The fourth division of the sky is the Tattwakash which refers, as the name suggests, to the essential form of the sky element which is the subtlest form of the five elements created in creation and has, inter alia, such virtues as being infinite, eternal, immutable, immaculate, omnipresent, all pervading, all encompassing, fathomless, measureless etc.

Lastly, the fifth division of the sky is called the Suryakash or that portion of the sky that surrounds the celestial Sun. It is therefore as radiant and splendorous as the sun itself, and it is almost impossible to see it with naked eyes. The brightest object in the heavens, the Sun, is present here, and as is well known this Sun is a metaphor for a number of things, such as life as well as the light of knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and erudition, and therefore for the supreme transcendental Brahm. In fact this Brahm possesses all the virtues displayed by the sky, and therefore the latter is usually used as a metaphor for Brahm, though this Brahm's virtues are not limited to the ones displayed by the sky which forms only a fraction of all the virtues possessed by Brahm.

In this context, there are a number of Upanishads in the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition that describes these skies.

For instance, *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad*, Brahman 1, section 2, verse no. 13, and Brahman 4, section 1, verse no.1-4, says that these five subtle skies are the following—(1) Akash—the vacant space above the earth that has no light of its own, and it is dark and neutral from within and without; (2) Parakash—the space that burns with a fire like that of hell from within and without; (3) Mahakash—that space which is radiant with a divine glow that effuses from within it and permeates everywhere within its jurisdiction; (4) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; it is aglow with the splendour and radiance of the sun; and (5) Paramakash—that space which is brilliantly illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity.

Now let us see what this Upanishad has to say on the subject.

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/2/13—"Verse no. 13 = [In this verse, the Sun God describes the other four subtle skies from the perspective of metaphysics.]

With due diligent practice, the aspirant Yogi (ascetic) becomes without any faults or blemishes that taint ordinary people; he goes beyond or transcends the reach of the three Gunas or qualities (which are Sata, Raja and Tama), and he becomes one like the sky called 'Akash', which is the sky present just above the earth. [That is, he acquires virtues which are similar to the ones possessed by the sky][1]

With greater diligence, perseverance and practice, he becomes one like the deep recesses of the space which has bright stars in it[2]. This sky is called 'Parakash', or the sky

which is beyond the ordinary sky or the one which transcends the normal definition of the sky.

Beyond it is the sky lit by a brilliant light called 'Kalagni' which resembles the light that appears at the time of dooms-day. That is, there is total darkness here, symbolising total peace and elimination of all awareness of the existence of tormenting life in this mortal world. This sky is called 'Mahakash'[3].

After that is the sky called the 'Tattwakash'[4], literally meaning the essential or the principal factor that is at the core of the sky element and acts as its defining virtue. It symbolises the presence of the essential Truth, called the Tattwa, in the form of the fundamental virtues that characterise the qualities displayed by the sky.

And finally there is the sky which is radiant and splendorous with the light of millions of suns, and it is called 'Suryakash'[5]. [Brahm or the 'Truth' actually symbolically resides here. A parallel is drawn between the place where the self-illuminated Brahm resides and the sky where the splendorous sun lives to highlight the fact that just like the presence of the visible sun cannot be denied, the presence of Brahm too cannot be denied; just like the sun that illuminates the dark and fathomless bowls of the sky, the Brahm also illuminates the entire creation with is consciousness. The only practical difference between the physical sun and Brahm is the fact that the former (sun) can be perceived at the physical gross level of existence by means of seeing it with the eyes of the gross body while the latter (Brahm) can only be realised at the subtle level of consciousness. What the sun is to the gross visible world, Brahm is to the subtle invisible world. If the sun is 'true', then Brahm is also 'true'.] (13).

[Note—[1]The sky is unattached with and to anything. The sky is illuminated during the day and it is the path through which the chariot of the Sun God passes. At night, the same sky is illuminated by the moon and adorned by the stars which appear like so many jewels spread across the vast sheet of the sky. The sky harbours so many varieties of life, such as birds and insects and other sky borne creatures of different species; all trees and plants grow up towards the sky, and they bloom in the sky, because if a flowering plant is closed in a box, it would wither away and die. The sky remains free from any taints and blemishes though it has so many colours that keep on changing their hues, but these are not the actual colours of the sky but are caused by scattering of the sunlight by the dust particles or moisture present in the air; the presence of innumerable heavenly bodies and debris do not affect the sky, nor do the presence of dark cloud darken the sky or the presence of the sun or the moon actually cause any change in the nature of the sky, for as soon as they set, the sky reverts to its original state of blankness an neutrality. Likewise, the Yogi remains the same no matter which circumstance he finds himself in; he remains uniform, even, calm, unruffled and taintless.

[2]The ascetic is compared to the Parakash to signify the fact that he has depth of vision and has reached much higher in his spiritual pursuits where light is pure consciousness automatically effuses from him.

[3]With progress of his practice, the ascetic is able to reach the state of perpetual Samadhi wherein the awareness of the visible world is totally eliminated. For all practical purposes, the world has become dark and dead for him. There is a complete silence of

death around him. This is a metaphor for his state of mind that has ceased to exist vis-à-vis the external world.

[4]This sky is where the ascetic has an experience of the sky element; it also might refer to the state of consciousness when the ascetic realises the essential elements in their primary forms. This state is just before his one-on-one vision of the ultimate element—viz. the Truth, known as Brahm. This happens in the next sky.

[5]When he becomes more evolved in his yogic practice, the ascetic experiences a burst of divine light about him. This light is blinding and dazzling like the light of the heavenly sun; it is the light of self-realisation and symbolic of the realisation or witnessing of Brahm first hand.]"

Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 4/1/1-4—"Verse no. 1 = After that, sage Yagyavalkya asked the divine Purush or the Lord present in the splendorous halo around the sun, 'Please tell me about the characteristic features of the 'Vyom-Panchak', or the five forms of subtle skies'. [See also Brahman 1, Section 2, verse no. 13 in this context.] (1).

"Verse no. 2 = That Purush replied that the sky has five subtle forms or categories—viz. Akash, Parakash, Mahakash, Suryakash and Paramkash (2).

"Verse no. 3 = 'Akash' is that sky or space which is completely dark from within and without (because it is the space just above the surface of the earth and has no light of its own). 'Parakash' is that sky or space which is like the fire of death at the time of dooms day, or like the fire of hell. 'Mahakash' is that sky element which is full of immeasurable radiance and splendour from within and without (and is therefore has the opposite characteristic as that of the Akash). 'Suryakash' is that sky or space that resembles the dazzle and splendour of the sun (because it is in the vicinity of the latter). Finally, the 'Paramakash' is that sky which is indescribably bright, all pervading and all encompassing, and is an abode of immense bliss, joy and happiness (because it is the subtle sky where the supreme transcendental Brahm, who possesses all these characteristics displayed by this sky, is present) (3).

"Verse no. 4 = A person is definitely affected by the object which is the target of his attention and mental focus (4).

[Note—This is because he constantly, consistently and persistently thinks about this ideal, his goal, and this thinking affects him at his sub-conscious and psychological level. So he acquires certain traits that are inherently possessed by his object of adoration. He would begin to see the world with a vision that is conditioned by the way his sub-conscious and psychology has been affected by constant thoughts of the object that he adores and worships. There is a lot of symbolism here.

For example, if he has a narrow-minded view and limited knowledge of spiritualism and metaphysics, and perceives the creation as limited to the gross mortal creation upon this earth, then the sky just above the earth, called the 'Akash', becomes his horizon and he cannot see beyond it, remaining submerged in something that is dark, and would therefore remain enveloped in the veil of darkness of ignorance.

If he perceives the sky as a place where the hell is located, i.e. if his understanding of the sky element is limited by the view that the sky is symbolised by the 'Parakash'

which is nothing but hell where people go after death to suffer for their deeds, then he remains submerged in sorrows, sufferings, pains and miseries for the entire length of his life.

On the contrary, if he is wise and sees the sky as one of the five elements of creation, i.e. as the 'Mahakash', then he becomes as majestic, pure, glorious and radiant as the sky element. That is, he shines in his wisdom and erudition, his sagacity and enlightenment.

If his ideal is the sky which has the qualities of the sun, i.e. the Suryakash, then also he shines like the sun, giving light to others by his wisdom and erudition, by his knowledge and sane advice, showing them the righteous and auspicious path to liberation and deliverance just like the sun lights up the world by its light and shows the path to everyone who wish to go somewhere. Besides this, he remains alert and active as a man is during the day time, as opposed to the night hours when he is supposed to sleep.

Finally, if he worships the sky as the 'Paramakash', i.e. as the sky which is radiant from the radiance effusing from the supreme Brahm residing in it, then he is sure to become one like that Brahm himself. He too would become eternal and glorious as Brahm, he too would have a vast vision and develop a holistic view of this creation, and he too would be endowed with such qualities as equanimity, fortitude, magnanimity etc. that are the hallmarks of someone who is really holy, pious and divine.]"

According to *Advai Tarak Upanishad*, verse no. 7 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are five divisions of the sky that represent the infinite virtues of Brahm in a symbolic manner. These skies are the following—(1) the sky at the time of sun rise—viz, the sun with a rounded, brilliantly splendorous disc, having the fierceness and radiance like that of the fiercely burning fire—is able to achieve a similarly exalted stature. He becomes an image of that 'Akash' or the sky itself where the brilliant sun is seen. (2)The next sky that is described now is the dark sky before the sun rises, the pre-dawn sky. It is filled with twinkling stars that give the dark sky its soft and subtle hue of light. This sky is called the 'Paramakash'. (3) The third subtle sky is called 'Mahakash' and it is dazzling like the fire of Kaal, or the fire of dooms day. (4) The fourth sky is called 'Tattwakash', or the sky that surrounds the essential and ultimate universal Truth. This sky is considered as the best subtle space because it surrounds and harbours the 'truth', and is therefore suffused with a brilliant light. This sky forms the outer periphery of the next sky. (5) Finally, the fifth subtle sky is called the 'Suryakash', and it is brilliant and splendorous as if there were millions of suns in it.

When these hypothetical divisions are used as metaphors to describe Brahm, they acquire a mystical interpretation. For example, with relevance the five forms of skies as described in Advai Tarak Upanishad, the interpretation is as follows—A person who has wisdom and erudition to perceive Brahm as having the stupendous glory, radiance, splendour and energy as that possessed by the sun, the potentials and powers of fire, the life creating, sustaining and annihilating powers possessed both by the sun and the fire, and having the attributes of the sky—such as being fathomless, measureless, vast, subtlest of the five elements of creation, incorruptible, inherently spotless inspite of the presence of so many impurities, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, eternal and infinite etc.—becomes enlightened and exalted in

his mental stature. Such a man stands out amongst his compatriots and peers, and is honoured and lauded for his wisdom and enlightenment. This is a metaphoric way of saying that he becomes one like the sky element called Akash, and he remains firm in his convictions about Brahm and steadfastly established with the attributes of the sky. He is deemed to be as exalted and honourable as Brahm having the attributes of the sky element.

There is another interpretation to this verse. By realising Brahm, the ascetic acquires a divine halo around him which resembles the bright disc of the sun as it is seen during the day in the sky. His enlightenment and wisdom glow and emanate light which is enjoyed by others; they benefit from his presence amongst them.

Though the Parmakash representing the night sky appears to be dark and blank, it is actually not completely dark as the stars lend their light to it. The ascetic who is enlightened and realised represents the Parmakash because he seems to be bland, blank and disinterested in anything, but this is only a superficial view because darkness of the sky here does not mean ignorance or delusion but of remaining oblivious to all the corrupting influences of the world that might taint an ascetic's mind and heart. His apparently bland and blank heart and mind are twinkling with numerous gems of wisdom which are highlighted only when the dazzle of the sun symbolising the various charms of the world are eliminated. This metaphor of the stars in the background of the dark sky is a brilliant depiction of the vast possibilities and potentials that unfold themselves before a Brahm realised person. This person has a clean slate like the canopy of the dark sky, but the vast treasury of wisdom and enlightenment that he has is likened to the uncountable stars in the dark canopy of the night sky.

The ascetic acquires such mystical powers as represented by the Mahakash, and he can even cause destruction and death if he so wishes.

This Tattwakash is the sky that surrounds the transcendental and supreme Truth in creation, which is Brahm, and forms the peripheral sky around the central core. The self-illuminated Brahm is the source of all light in creation just like the celestial sun which is self-illuminated and which lights up the length and breadth of the sky of the solar system. If an ordinary sun has this potential and power, then one can imagine and expect innumerable times more from that authority that has created this sun in the first place and has given it its powers and potentials. After all, even modern science has established that our sun is not the only sun in the universe, and there is uncountable number of suns scattered in the bowl of the cosmos, some still in the nascent stage while others on the verge of extinction. So it is easy to visualise that Brahm which is at the core of this stupendous cosmic cauldron if we were to take only a physical stand on Brahm. From the metaphysical view point, this Brahm is the supreme authority in creation and the Soul of it. It is Brahm that drives this dynamo known as the creation. Therefore the sky or space where it is located is also glowing with the light that emanates from it much like the sky around the celestial sun. When the ascetic has realised Brahm, his inner self also glows with the divine light of self enlightenment, and it becomes as radiant and glorious as the sky around Brahm, because this Brahm is present in his very own self. The whole body of such a realised ascetic becomes radiant and glorious like this sky.

Finally we have the Suryakash or that sky that is in the immediate vicinity and in the presence of that stupendous fount of divine energy known as Brahm. This sky forms the inner ring or layer that immediately surrounds Brahm, and therefore it is natural that it is more dazzlingly bright than the other skies that are not so close, and it has a brightness that resembles the blinding light of millions of suns just like the immediate space around the celestial sun. This immediate sky of the sun just cannot be seen by a naked eye, it is impossible to do so, because it would burn the eyes, whereas it is possible to see the sky at a distance from the sun. Similarly, the ascetic's inner core is dazzlingly bright with the light of self-realisation and enlightenment. All other lights, or all other knowledge and all other ways of attaining Brahm pale into insignificance when this light is witnessed by the ascetic in his own bosom.

The skies have also been described in *Trishiki Brahmin Upanishad*, 1/5-8 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

According to *Brihad Aranyak Upanishad*, Canto 4, Brahman 1, verse no. 1-6, the Akash or the sky/space element is the Pratistha or established fame and glory of Brahm. It is a well established tenet of Vedanta that Brahm is synonymous with the Akash and is uniformly diffused throughout the sky so much so that it is impossible to segregate them much like it is impossible to separate salt after it is dissolved in water. The unique qualities of Brahm and Akash are similar as follows—they are infinite, eternal, uncorrupt, pristine pure, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent etc. The sky element is the nearest analogue to Brahm because it is the subtlest of the five elements in creation. Everything in creation came into being in the bowl of the sky, lives in this bowl and would perish in it, but this sky would be there even after that. All these unique attributes of the sky are like the grand attributes of Brahm on display, making the Akash the Pratistha of Brahm.

Please also refer to 1/5/12; 2/1/5; 2/3/2-5; 2/5/10; 3/7/8.12; 3/8/3-11; 3/9/13 of Brihad Aranyak Upahishad.

The concept of the Sky has also been elaborately described in *Chandogya Upanishad*, canto 7, section 12 of the Sam Veda.

(22) Sat-Chit-Anand--References--Krishna Yajur Veda's following Upanishad = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 26-27; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 41; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 23; Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 46.

Now let us examine what the *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 6 and 23 have to say on the subject—

"Verse no. 6 = There is a sacred entity called 'Sachidanand[1]' (one that is an embodiment of Sat or truth, Chit or consciousness, and Anand or bliss) which is more exalted, holy, auspicious, divine and sublime in nature, and it transcends the definition of goodness, holiness, auspiciousness and godliness as these terms are usually understood to mean by people belonging to the various Varnas and Ashrams which are the various classes of society and the phases in the life of a person respectively.

Therefore, such persons who believe that by merely following the rituals and observing the various sacraments as prescribed for the various Varnas and Ashrams in a mechanical and ritualistic way (without understanding their real intentions and meaning), or by becoming an expert in the different tenets of the scriptures and preaching about them to others without actually understanding and implementing them fully oneself one would be entitled to obtain Mukti or Moksha, then such persons are living in a fool's paradise. They are indeed called 'Agyani' because they are ignorant of the truth and the reality. They are deluded and under false impression that they are being religious and are following the correct path that would lead to their Mukti or Moksha—i.e. that any of these paths would give them certain liberation and deliverance from the fetters of this world and provide their souls with the grand opportunity of obtaining emancipation and salvation[2].

It is difficult to say when such ignorant persons would find real Mukti or Moksha. [In other words, it is doubtful that they would ever find liberation and deliverance for themselves in the true spiritual sense; it is uncertain when their soul would find emancipation and salvation. In the context of what has been said earlier in verse no. 2 of this Canto 2 above, the following of the designated path as laid down for the people belonging to the different Varnas and Ashrams is only one of the ways to obtain Brahm Vidya, but not the ultimate way and not the ultimate aim of spiritual practices. The medium is not the aim. These paths help one to inculcate self discipline and practice an auspicious lifestyle as prescribed in the scriptures so that the creature can rise and lift himself from a low level of existence to an exalted state, but it is up to the practitioner to decide what rewards he wants for them. If he wishes worldly gains and fame, he gets them; if he wishes a better life and ascendance for himself, he would get it. But he must remember that all these wishes entail some form of expectation and involvement in deeds done in accordance with the tenets of the scriptures and the laws framed for the different Varnas and Ashrams. Since doing of deeds would produce a train of consequences, the Atma can never find true liberation and deliverance because such consequences would have to be suffered or enjoyed by it only with the aid of the gross body. And as long as there is the body, where can the Atma say that it has found liberation and deliverance because this gross body is the foremost millstone around its neck; it is shackled to this body. So, as long as the man thinks that he is doing something—though auspicious, righteous and strictly in accordance with the principles laid down for him by the laws of Varnas and Ashrams to which he belongs—he is still involved in doing deeds, and therefore cannot escape either the law of action and its reaction or the intervention of the body because deeds cannot be done without the body. Hence, true liberation and deliverance eludes him; he cannot expect to find emancipation and salvation for his Atma, which is his pure conscious 'self' and not the actual doer of any deeds, if he entangles and implicates this Atma in the vicious cycle of deeds and consequences, whether done in accordance with the guiding principles for various Varnas and Ashrams, or not.] (6).

[Note—[1]Sat-Chit-Anand—that is, to be eternally truthful, eternally conscious, and eternally blissful, these are the auspicious virtues of the Atma. Refer also to Canto 2,

verse no. 23 of the present Varaaha Upanishad as well as to Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 26-27; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 41 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

[2]There are four Varnas or classes, and four Ashrams or sections or phases of life in Hindu society—viz. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are the four Varnas, and Brahmacharya (the 1st phase of life as a celibate, or student life), Grihastya (the 2nd phase as a householder), Vanprastha (the 3rd phase when the person stops being active in worldly affairs and heads for pilgrimage or forest) and Sanyas (the 4th and last stage when he takes to complete renunciation and prepares to welcome death).

Each has a set of long elaborate laws and regulations that govern its working; each has its list of sanctioned duties, religious sacraments and ceremonies, deities and rituals, dos and don'ts. These are collectively called the Dharma of that particular Ashram and are used as yardsticks, benchmarks or gold standards to judge a person and decide if he has led an auspicious and noble life or not, what rewards or punishments and the subsequent end he deserves, whether he goes to hell or heaven, whether he rises or falls, what new life forms he would get in his next birth, and whether he is able to please the Gods who preside over his Ashram or not. So an ordinary man is engrossed in fulfilling these long demands all his life so much so that he has no time to think beyond them and decide things for himself whether what he is doing is really worth the effort and would really and truthfully give him spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, whether merely spending the entire life adhering to the Dharma of the Ashram would give him eternity and peace and bliss that he so assiduously and urgently seeks.

Usually people think that by merely following the numerous tenets and doctrines of the Ashram they belong to in a sincere and diligent manner they would find Mukti or Moksha for themselves which would provide them eternal bliss and happiness—but this is a fallacious thinking and a grave error of perception. They miss the intent of the main teaching of the scriptures and their hidden meaning; they simply go about their lives like a machine in a factory floor without realising that they are surreptitiously and unawares being chained to the cycle of deeds and their results. They forget that there is no such thing as a physical heaven or a better after-life where there is eternal peace and happiness and where one can aspire to go after having led an auspicious and righteous life strictly according to the tenets and doctrines of the Ashram they belong to. They do not realise that all deeds, no matter how auspicious, righteous and noble they are, have a chain of consequences that cannot be avoided. These consequences may be in the form of a good reward or as a punishment, but they have to borne nevertheless by the doer of deeds. If the deeds are good, the reward would translate into better birth in a higher clan, better life, and better facilities and opportunities for enjoying the material pleasures and comforts of the sense objects of the world in the new life. But this chain would continue endlessly, and it would never translate into 'Mukti and Moksha' because of the intervention of deeds, their results, the body and the world. The creature continues to oscillate between births and new births depending upon the nature of deeds done by him in a given birth. He might be suffering from torments in the current birth because of

some bad deeds of the past, and he does good deeds now so as to get rid of his miseries. These auspicious deeds might mitigate his sufferings and he thinks that he has found Mukti or liberation from his miseries and torments, but this is only a temporary form of Mukti rather than a permanent one because these deeds have their own set of effects and the creature gets a new birth as the reward of these good deeds. It is this basic fault in their thinking that they continue to remain whirling in the cycle of birth and death. So we see that even good and auspicious deeds are no solution for the torments being suffered by the soul, and the true form of Mukti and Moksha is attained differently. The concept of deeds and their consequences have been explained under the head 'The thery of Karma' in serial number 20 of this appendix.

True form of Mukti (liberation and deliverance) and Moksha (final emancipation and salvation for the soul) is obtained when the chain of deeds and their consequences is broken. This is possible only when the wise and enlightened man realises that his 'true self' is the pure conscious Atma and not the body, that the deeds are done by the body and not the Atma, that the Atma is a separate entity vis-à-vis the body, and that the body is limited by its physical grossness, is perishable and mortal as compared to the Atma which is ethereal, eternal, infinite and immortal. So, when he breaks free from delusions that had made him think on the contrary, when he overcomes ignorance about spiritual truths, when he becomes wisened regarding the great axiomatic maxims as espoused and expounded by the Upanishads, he becomes 'self-realised' in as much as he has come to be aware of the facts regarding what constitutes true Mukti and Moksha, and how to attain them.

Therefore, a wise and erudite man who has correctly applied his intellect to read, hear and interpret the Upanishads in the correct way and in the correct perspective comes to realise that attempts to seek peace and eternity by involving himself in doing deeds and seeking happiness and peace in the outside world, which unfortunately is perishable and a treasury of miseries itself, is hogwash and cheating one's own self. He must understand that true peace and eternity rests no where else but inside one's own self. There is no thing as a God somewhere in a distant heaven, there is no heaven in the first place, and there is no after-life and no better or worse life in the real sense. It is what one makes of one's life that it becomes better or worse as these are relative terms.

A careful reading and analysis of the scriptures makes him wisened to the eclectic truth about 'God' and he realises that the Divinity that he intends to worship and honour and please by doing so many rituals and observing so many sacraments and obeying rules of the Ashram or Varnas to which he belongs is to be found no where outside but in his own bosom as his pure conscious 'self' known as the Atma which is not only his true self but also the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, himself personified. He understands that this Atma does no do anything, and that whatever is done is done by the body with which the Atma is not related except for the fact that the body is its temporary habitat till the time of the Atma's final liberation from its shackles. He also understands that true Mukti or Moksha is obtained when this Atma leaves this body and does not enter another, i.e. when there is no transmigration, and this is possible only

when the Atma completely disassociates itself from deeds that the body does according to the sanctions of the Ashram in which it lives. As a result, when the body is shed, the Atma does not carry over any baggage of the past life and simply merges to become one with the cosmic Consciousness that uniformly pervades throughout the creation.

But it must be remembered that this eclectic awareness and enlightenment can come only when one analytically and thoroughly studies and delves deep into the hidden meaning of the scriptures, and peels of the outer shell of words and phrases into the spirit of those words. This is where the importance of 'self study' comes in under the guidance of an expert teacher and led by the wise intellect. Refer Brahm Bindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 13-22.

Therefore we conclude that true Moksha or Mukti for the creature is obtained when he rises above the limitations of these four Ashrams.

The concept of eternal Mukti and Moksha have been the subject matter of discussion of many a Upanishads. This magnificient spiritual concept has been elaborately described under the heading 'Mukti' in serial number 14 of this appendix.]

"Verse no. 23 = A wise and enlightened man who is of the firm conviction and faith that my (Vishnu's) form as Varaaha is a divine manifestation of the Supreme Being's eternal, infinite, non-dual form that is characterised by the eclectic and sublime virtues of Sata (absolute truth), Chit (absolute pure consciousness) and Anand (absolute bliss and ecstasy; absolute beatitude and felicity)—for such a person there is no such concept as 'Bandhan', i.e. fetters and shackle that tie a man to something, or 'Mukti', i.e. liberation and deliverance from such fetters and shackles[1]. [That is, they are eternally free and need not make special efforts to obtain it. This happens because such persons are able to see behind the Lord's physical form as a 'Boar' and realise that it is the supreme Lord Vishnu in this form. This is the path of true devotion and submission for the supreme Lord which paves the way for their liberation and deliverance from being perpetually remaining entrapped in this cycle of birth and death. It would also mean that they have developed the insight and the ability to peer behind the external façade of things which are apparent but not the real thing, not the whole 'truth', as in this particular case when Lord Vishnu appears to be like a boar, but actually this external appearance is not the truth about the Lord because he is the supreme Lord of creation who has no specific form of any kind let alone as a boar; the Lord is obviously not an ordinary animal such as a boar! In fact, this form of boar is one of Vishnu's countless visible manifestations, as the entire creation is an image of the Viraat Purush, the sublime, macrocosmic, all-pervading and invisible form of the Lord. It is the Viraat Purush who has revealed himself in the form of the entire visible world and all its inhabitant creatures in his own image. Therefore, all the Gods of the Trinity, such as Vishnu the protector and sustainer of creation, Brahma the creator of this visible creation, and Shiva the concluder of this creation, are manifestations of this single universal Divinity known as the Viraat Purush. This Viraat Purush is himself the gross body of the Supreme Being, the supreme transcendental Brahm who, in his desire to initiate this creation, had gradually assumed bodies that became grosser by degrees until Brahm was able to realise his wish of creating this visible world. So, Viraat Purush was the first step, followed by Vishnu and the other Gods, and

finally the creature with a gross body.] (23).

[Note—[1]There is another metaphysical interpretation of this verse. By saying that the physical form of the boar is not the latter's true identity, it clearly implies that a person who thinks that he has known the truth and reality by seeing only the external features and characters of world has not known the reality and the truth about it. On the other hand, a man who realises that the boar is not an ordinary animal but the Lord of creation revealed in that form, he has actually understood the truth that the Upanishads try hard to preach and emphasise. In other words, a person who realises that the pure consciousness that resides in the body of a living being, whether it is a boar or a human being, is the same divine entity that is known as the cosmic Consciousness which is universal and uniform in the entire creation, is the one who has really understood the meaning and essence of the teachings of the Upanishads, for they teach about the non-duality and universality of the Atma, also called the universal soul. This is because this Atma is the ultimate spiritual 'truth', and truth is always one and not two if it is to remain 'true'. Such a 'truth' is called the 'Absolute Truth', and in the realm of metaphysics it is called Brahm at the macro level of creation, and Atma at the micro level. Since the gross world shows signs of conscious life because of an esoteric factor hidden deep inside it without which there would be no such thing as 'life', this 'consciousness' is synonymous with life. And since life is very much in evidence and verifiable, this consciousness is also synonymous with 'truth'.

But it is very important not to confuse issues here. This consciousness needs a gross physical body to reveal itself because it is ethereal, subtle and invisible by nature. At the same time, the gross body is merely a reflection of this consciousness residing inside it; the body is an image of the 'truth' like one sees an image in a mirror. This image is reflective of some grand and irrefutable truth, but it is not this truth itself. So, a wise man is one who ascertains the 'truth' through the medium of the external appearance of this truth. In other words, he has developed sufficient degree of wisdom and erudition that enables him to see that the physical body of the 'boar' hides the supreme soul of creation known as Brahm. This Brahm has manifested himself first as the Viraat Purush, and then as Vishnu who assumed a grosser form of the Boar so that he can physically do certain things that is not possible to do in an ethereal form.

But this knowledge must not be extended to ridiculous proportions—one should not go and embrace a boar saying that this ferocious animal is his Lord! All things made of iron are 'iron' in the true sense, but that does not mean that one calls a kitchen knife made of iron as a sward or saw because they are also made of iron. That would be height of nonsense and stupidity.]"

Self realisation and acquisition of truthful knowledge about the Atma, which is the pure conscious 'self' of the creature and the only spiritual truth of creation, leads one to access the eternal fountain of truth, consciousness and bliss, collectively called Sat-Chit-Anand, as affirmed in *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 46. To quote this Upanishad—"It is by the grace of Brahma the creator that I (sage Aashwalaayan) have acquired this eternal and truthful knowledge of the Atma (pure consciousness). This has provided me with eternal and perpetual state of Sat-Chit-Anand

(i.e. I enjoy the bliss that comes with coming to know the absolute truth pertaining to the pure consciousness which removes all confusions and their attendant doubts and perplexities, and provides eternal bliss and happiness). That is, I have had the privilege and good fortune to enjoy the beatitude and felicity that comes with Brahm-realisation which naturally follows self-realisation (46)."

(23) Bhumika--The word Bhumika refers to the stages of development of wisdom. It also means the background, characteristics, qualities, traits, attributes or virtues that helps one to become spiritually wise and enlightened. It would mean to view the pure conscious self known as the Atma against the backdrop or background of certain level of spiritual development. Bhumika is also the role certain characteristic features of this creation play in the spiritual evolvement of an aspirant. It involves inculcation of certain auspicious virtues in a man that would act as standards to determine the level of spiritual development or evolvement or enhancement he has attained. The Bhumikas would act as the gold-standard to judge a man's stature in the sphere of spiritualism. Hence, the term Bhumika would mean certain characteristics that must be present in a person, or certain spiritual criteria against which he must be weighed or judged if he is to be called an enlightened and self-realised person or a person who has obtained spiritual liberation and deliverance for himself, a person who has freed himself from the fetters that shackle others to the mundane life in this world.

The concept of Bhumika has been explained in detail in two Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, viz. (i) Akchu Upanishad which elucidates the seven Bhumikas of Yoga in its Canto 2, verse nos. 27-42, and (ii) Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-4—1.11, 1-35—2, and Canto 5, verse no. 71-75, which lays stress on Yoga and draws a parallel between Bhumika and the three steps of Pranayam, such as Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak.

Types of Bhumikas—The Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 81-89, the Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, and the Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 27-42 lists seven types of Bhumikas. On the other hand, the Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 71-75 describe four types of Bhumikas.

Now let us quote them to see what they have to say on the subject.

(a) The *seven types of Bhumikas*:—

The *Annapurna Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition describes the seven Bhumikas with a metaphysical perspective in its Canto 5, verse nos. 81-89. Now, let us examine these verses—"Canto 5, Verse no. 81 = [Verse nos. 81-89 outline how this eclectic state of existence is realizable by an ascetic. Seven steps are outlined in this connection, and they are called the 'seven Bhumikas'.]

The way to achieve this glorious goal is to study the scriptures (especially the Upanishads which succinctly and wisely present a refined or distilled version of the voluminous scriptures which are otherwise like an ocean that is more prone to drown the aspirant than to take him to the other shore of spiritual liberation and deliverance), having or developing contacts with

noble, enlightened, wise and learned men, developing a sense of renunciation, dispassion and detachment towards this world and the body, and constant, consistent and persistent practice. [Refer Canto 5, verse no. 71 in this context.]

This is considered as the first method or 'Bhumika'[1]. It is the first step that an aspirant must take in order to realise his spiritual goals (81).

[Note—[1]The word Bhumika refers to the stages of development of wisdom. It also means the background, characteristics, qualities, traits, attributes or virtues that helps one to become spiritually wise and enlightened. It would mean to view the pure conscious self known as the Atma against the backdrop or background of certain level of spiritual development. Bhumika is also the role certain characteristic features of this creation play in the spiritual evolvement of an aspirant. It involves inculcation of certain auspicious virtues in a man that would act as standards to determine the level of spiritual development or evolvement or enhancement he has attained. The Bhumikas would act as the gold-standard to judge a man's stature in the sphere of spiritualism. Hence, the term Bhumika would mean certain characteristics that must be present in a person, or certain spiritual criteria against which he must be weighed or judged if he is to be called an enlightened and self-realised person or a person who has obtained spiritual liberation and deliverance for himself, a person who has freed himself from the fetters that shackle others to the mundane life in this world.

Bhumika is an indication of the degree of spiritual achievement of an aspirant, and refers to one or the other aspect, step, level or stage of one's spiritual progress.

The concept of Bhumika has been explained in detail in two Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, viz. (i) Akchu Upanishad which elucidates the seven Bhumikas of Yoga in its Canto 2, verse nos. 27-42, and (ii) Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-4—1.11, 1-35—2, and Canto 5, verse no. 71-75, which lays stress on Yoga and draws a parallel between Bhumika and the three steps of Pranayam, such as Purak, Kumbhak and Rechak.

The present Annapurna Upanishad describes the metaphysical connotations of the term Bhumika in the context of the steps that a spiritual aspirant is expected to follow before he becomes truly self-realised and enlightened, and thereby attain spiritual liberation and deliverance.]

"Canto 5, verse no. 82 = The second Bhumika (method or step) is to deeply think, to ponder and contemplate.

The third Bhumika is to establish strong relationship with and have constant company of men who are noble, wise, self-realised and enlightened. [Compare this statement with what has been said in verse no. 81 where it was mentioned that one should develop contacts with them. In this verse he is advised to foster these contacts and mature them into healthy relationship. It is only then that the goodness of these holy men would transmit to the aspirant.]

The fourth Bhumika is the elimination or annihilation of the Vasanas that are natural to a person. [The Vasanas are the passions, lust, desires and yearnings that a creature has for the material world and its numerous charms and temptations. It is to be noted that a greater part of this Upanishad's Cantos 1 till 5 are dedicated to the concept of Vasana, its negative affect on

the creature's spiritual well-being, how to overcome these Vasanas, and what the benefits of elimination of Vasanas are.] (82).

"Canto 5, verse no. 83 = The fifth Bhumika is to remain in a perpetual pure state of existence marked by blissfulness and enlightenment that comes by realizing the truthful existence of the 'consciousness'. This state is untainted and unaffected by the grossness and delusions of the world around the aspirant.

Such enlightened and self-realised persons appear to be half awake and half asleep. They are 'awake' in the sense that outwardly they go about the routine of life in this world like other ordinary men, but internally they are un-involved in what the body does and unconcerned with the result as well. This happens because they are lost in the thoughts of the Atma, or are in a perpetual state of meditation and contemplation. Thus, for all practical purposes they are 'asleep' because their mind and sub-conscious do not register any of the events of the outside world like a man who is physically sleeping. [Obviously, this refers to the Turiya state of existence of consciousness which is equivalent to the state of Samadhi.]

Such persons are said to be Jivan Mukta—i.e. one who has attained spiritual liberation and deliverance inspite of going about his routine life in this world, and having a gross body that is still alive.] (83).

"Canto 5, verse no. 84 = This state of Jivan Mukta (as described above) marks the sixth Bhumika. In this state of existence, the creature is not aware of the external gross world and its material charms or temptations of its sense objects. His sense organs (and therefore the body) are no more attracted by their respective sense objects in this world because his mind and sub-conscious have virtually become defunct and inoperative. [This is a natural corollary of his having practiced the tenets of renunciation and detachment from the world, having studied the scriptures, and having established communion with wise men.]

During this state he lives blissfully and in a high level of ecstasy. It is equivalent to the Sushupta state of existence of consciousness.

[The Sushupta state is the deep sleep state of existence which is the third level of existence for the consciousness. During this state—which comes after the dreaming state known as Swapna—the mind and the sub-conscious are made inoperative as far as the relationship between the creature and the world is concerned. In this state, the creature does not even dreams, and hence he is completely rested and blissful. The reason is that even during dreams he is very much involved in the activities of the world of dreams at a subtle level of existence though his physical gross body might be resting in the physical gross world. So if he wakes up directly from dreams, he is restless and tired though the world thinks he had rested all the while he lay down sleeping. This is because his mind was not at all at rest during dreams. As a result, the creature is exhausted and drained of his energy if he dreams throughout the period of his sleep, and when he wakes up he is not refreshed but as weary as before. This condition is not applicable during the Sushupta state when the mind too goes to sleep. Therefore, during the Sushupta state the creature finds complete rest. It is a state of complete oblivion when the

world—both at the gross plane as well as the subtle plane—simply vanishes. The practical result is that when one sleeps soundly without dreaming, he wakes up refreshed and rejuvenated.

From the perspective of the physical existence in this world, the Sushupta state is a natural bestower of calmness, tranquility, restfulness and peacefulness to the troubled creature who is endlessly harassed by the countless problems of the existence in this physical gross world. From the perspective of metaphysics and spiritualism, it is a bestower of spiritual bliss and peace.] (84).

"Canto 5, verse no. 85 = The transcendental state of existence, which corresponds to the fourth state of existence of consciousness, is known as 'Turiya'. It is one of its only kind, and marks that stage of consciousness when the bliss and peace obtained by it during the third state of Sushupta (as described in verse no. 84 above) becomes deep, permanent and steady. In this state the aspirant attains the level of peace, bliss, stability and calmness that is attainable only when one is truly free from all bondages and obligations. It is equivalent to his obtaining Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) of a high order, the Mukti which is known as 'Kaivalya' because it is unique and one of its only kind as no other form of freedom provides the spiritual aspirant such a high intensity of peace, bliss, calmness and stability which Turiya state does.

Hence, this Turiya state is the sixth Bhumika characterized by exemplary beauty and divine qualities of the Spirit marked by a high degree of glorious virtues such as 'Samtaa' (having equanimity; evenness of mind and thought; stability, calmness and poise; treating everything and everyone alike; remaining unfazed, unmoved and unaffected under all circumstances), 'Swachataa' (purity and cleanliness of the inner-self), and 'Saumyataa' (simplicity, humility, piety, gentleness and an unpretentious nature) (85).

"Canto 5, verse no. 86 = The state of existence that is beyond the Turiya state, i.e. the fifth state of existence of consciousness corresponding to the sixth Bhumika (as narrated in verse no. 85) above is the higher state of transcendental existence known as 'Turiya-Teet' (literally 'one that is beyond Turiya'), provides the spiritual aspirant 'Nirvana', which is complete and absolute spiritual liberation and deliverance of the soul. It is the state when the ascetic obtains his final emancipation and salvation. It frees him, once and for all, from all the fetters that had been shackling him for generations after generations to this deluding world and the gross body. It is the final resting place and the destination for his soul, his Atma or his 'self'.

[It ought to be noted here that all the earlier Bhumikas are stepping-stones for the spiritual aspirant for reaching this final citadel of enlightenment when his Atma finds its final spiritual goal in life. When he reaches the Turiya-teet state of existence, he is finally and irrevocably Mukta—i.e. he will no longer be entangled in this world, he will no longer be influenced by Maya (delusions), Vasanas (worldly passions) and Vrittis (worldly tendencies) etc., he will no longer need any other kind of liberation and deliverance which can be superior to this state for he will have found his ultimate spiritual destination which would undoubtedly give him complete rest, bliss, peace, beatitude and felicity. It would mark the crowning glory of all his spiritual

endeavours undertaken through generations. It is the pinnacle of self-realisation and synonymous with Brahm-realisation. It does not matter now whether or not he retains his gross body, for the latter has become irrelevant now. Similarly, it matters not now whether or not he interacts with the world at the physical plane, for the world has become non-existent for him now. Such a highly evolved and exalted state of transcendental existence of the consciousness or the 'self' is known as 'Nirvana'.]

The seventh Bhumika (aspect, step, level, stage of one's spiritual progress) which is equivalent to the transcendental state of existence of consciousness—whether it is in the preliminary or earlier stage called the Turiya, or the higher echelons of spiritual realisation called the 'Turiya-teet'—is indeed the best and a highly mature stage in one's spiritual progress; it is literally the highest rung of the spiritual ladder for an ascetic.

It is not the stature that can be easily attained by all living beings. In other words, it is rare to be successful in attaining the Turiya-teet state of existence (86).

[Note—In the context of this verse, refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 107, 109-114.]

"Canto 5, verse no. 87 = The first three Bhumikas (outlined in verse nos. 81-82) correspond to the Jagrat or the waking state of consciousness which is the first state of existence in metaphysical terms. The fourth Bhumika (outlined in verse no. 82) when all awareness of the external physical world cease, and it appears to the world seen in one's dreams, corresponds to the second stage of existence of consciousness called the Swapna or dreaming state.

[During this state of existence of the spiritual aspirant, the entire world appears to be like a dream for him though he may appear to be active in this world and be a physical participant in its activities. But this participation or activity done by him is only superficial and perfunctory in nature, because internally he is totally oblivious of what is happening around him in the physical world. The reason is he is completely absorbed in meditation and contemplation; his mind and sub-conscious are trained to remain detached from the world and the gross body. Since it is the mind that makes a man aware of the world as well as of the activities of the body, when the mind is defunct, the world and the body too become non-existent for all practical purposes.

Hence, just like the case when a man is totally unaware of what is happening in the physical gross world when he is dreaming in his sleep, an ascetic who has successfully attained the fourth Bhumika or stage in his spiritual progress too remains oblivious of what his gross body physically does in this material world, as well as the physical fact that the material world of sense objects is actually there. His mind simply does not pick up any impulses brought in by the organs of perception in the body.

This eclectic fourth Bhumika is compared to the dreaming state of existence called 'Swapna' because during dreams the subtle aspect of the mind known as the sub-conscious is active and it conjures up a fascinating world of dreams which is a mirror image of the physical gross world in which the man lives. A man participates in the world of dreams much in the same manner as he does in the physical world, but his body is not involved and neither does he remember anything of it when he wakes up from dreams.

Similarly, a self-realised ascetic or spiritual aspirant who has progressed in his spiritual endeavours to reach the stage of fourth Bhumika appears to be physically involved or active in the gross world, but internally he is totally unaware of anything around him. He is absorbed in meditation and contemplation; he is lost in the thoughts of his Atma and experiencing the nectar of spiritual bliss that drips from it.

Therefore, for all practical purposes, the world is like a dream for him—an imaginary entity that has no substance and meaning, a fantasy of the mind that has no reality and truth in it. He may look as if he is an active participant in the activities of the world, but none of the things of the world or the deeds done by his body affect his inner-self which remains steadfastly calm and composed as if nothing has happened at all. This eclectic state of existence is compared to dreams because in the latter case a man is also involved in numerous activities in the imaginary world created in his dreams, but when he wakes up into the realities of life none of the things that he had encountered during his dreams, and none of the events that had occurred in his dreams, have any relevance for him when he wakes up to face the realities in the practical life in this physical world. He will not even remember the things he did or saw during his dreaming phase of existence though at the time when he was seeing the dream he was an active and personal participant in all the events of the dream.] (87).

[Note—There are basically five states of existence of consciousness in metaphysical terms—viz. Jagrat or waking, Swapna or dreaming, Sushupta or deep sleep, Turiya or one that transcends the Sushupta but is the initial stage of complete spiritual attainment and self-realisation, and Turiya-teet which marks the higher stage of transcendental existence which is complete and absolute. All these different stages have been described in detail in a separate appendix of this volume.]

"Canto 5, verse no. 88 = True Anand (bliss, happiness, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity) is so overwhelming and all-embracing that it is like a thick bank of dense and dark cloud that covers the sky during the rainy season. It is obtained during the Sushupta state or the deep sleep state of existence of consciousness that comes after the Swapna or dreaming state.

When it is viewed with the perspective of the different Bhumikas, the Sushupta state of consciousness metaphorically corresponds to the fifth Bhumika. [Refer verse nos. 83-84.]

That is, the fifth Bhumika is that state of consciousness which is equivalent to the Sushupta state when the aspirant lives in the world much like he would do when he is in a state of deep sleep or sound asleep. There is no disturbance of any kind now—he does not even see a dream that might keep his subtle mind engaged and restless, which in turn would translate into the Atma being entangled at the subtle level of existence as it happens during the imaginary world of dreams. The Atma does not find peace and rest during the Swapna phase of sleep (i.e. during the dreaming state) because the subtle mind keeps nudging at the Atma constantly while the world of dreams lasts, thereby robbing the Atma of its chance of finding peace and tranquility in a serene environment which it seeks to obtain while it sleeps. During this phase of deep sleep called Sushupta, the Atma endeavours to eliminate all disturbances arising from the world by completely eliminating them by making the body sleep soundly and the organs of

perception becoming totally defunct.

[This is the basic reason why a man wishes to 'sleep'—his 'true self' known as the Atma wishes to find rest and peace. The Atma wishes to break free from the constant turmoil and miseries of worldly existence, and instead find some time to take complete rest and find peace in a tranquil and serene atmosphere to rejuvenate its self. When his body is physically asleep, the sense organs too go into hibernation. The effect is that the world ceases to matter because the latter is known by the man only through his various sense organs—such as the eye which sees, the nose which smells, the ears which hears, the tongue which tastes, and the skin which feels. So, when the man is asleep, his Atma is able to eliminate the physical gross world. But ironically, this is not the end of its troubles—because the sub-conscious mind is very much active even as the active aspect of the mind that actually perceives the world through the inputs received by the body and its sense organs goes into hibernation when the physical body sleeps.

Hence, for all practical purposes, the Atma does not get what it had wanted by making the body 'sleep'. The Atma does not find true peace and rest when the man dreams even though he may be physically asleep because the subtle mind is active, and it in its turn keeps the Atma engaged in another world of imagination known as the world of dreams. The only difference between the two types of worlds is that while the world of the waking state was physical and gross, the one of the dreams is subtle and imaginary. Hence, the only difference between the engagements of the Atma in these two worlds is in the degree and level of involvement, and whether this engagement is of a gross nature or of a subtle nature. Other than this, involvement of any kind and the subsequent restlessness that it creates for the Atma is the same in both the cases if it is not properly trained to keep itself aloof from all entanglements altogether, whether at the gross level of the waking state or at the subtle level of the dreaming state.

Therefore the Sushupta state marks that stage in the Atma's quest for peace and tranquility when it shuns even the subtle world of dreams. It is this stage that is being referred to as the 'fifth Bhumika' in this verse.]

Metaphysically, this stage is characterized by bliss and peace because the mind and the sub-conscious are both defunct and inoperative. There is nothing to disturb the calmness, rest, peace, tranquility and serenity of the Atma in this stage of existence. It is the next higher step as compared to the Swapna stage.

[Whereas during the Swapna or dreaming state of existence the subtle aspect of the mind was active though its gross aspect was inactive, during the Sushupta state even this subtle aspect is made defunct. With the mind out of the scene, there is a sense of an all-encompassing and all-pervading tranquility and serenity as far as the Atma of the spiritual aspirant is concerned. The world vanishes even at the subtle level of imagination which was not the case during dreams, because in the latter case this subtle world existed.

With the world completely annihilated, there is no instigator or tempter left that would provoke any kind of restlessness and agitation in the Atma which incidentally happens to be the 'true self' of the spiritual aspirant or ascetic. Whereas in the earlier two stages of Jagrat and Swapna he was oscillating between two worlds—one of a physical variety and the other of a

subtle kind respectively, in the Sushupta state both of them simply become non-existent, and hence irrelevant for a wise man. The peace and tranquility that he experiences at the Sushupta stage of existence of consciousness is holistic and overwhelming; it has depth and sublimity.]

The next higher stage is the sixth Bhumika. [Refer verse no. 85.] It corresponds to the Turiya state of existence which is metaphysically the fourth state of existence of consciousness. It is the preliminary stage of the higher levels of spiritual attainment, and marks a step further ahead than the one represented by the Sushupta stage.

[In this stage of Turiya, achievements of the Sushupta stage are made more permanent, stable and effective; they acquire depth. Whereas the consciousness is susceptible to reverting back to the Swapna state from the Sushupta state, and in fact it actually oscillates between the two, when it enters the Turiya state its peace and tranquility along with their attendent bliss and ecstasy become perpetual and robust. The Turiya state is the stepping stone for the highest state known as the Turiya-teet which literally means the one level of existence which transcends all known exalted states, and beyond which there is no higher state of blissful and divine existence. However, the Turiya state itself is a state when self-realisation dawns upon the mental horizon of the spiritual aspirant. He is filled with an overwhelming sense of extreme spiritual bliss, tranquility, serenity, ecstasy, beatitude and felicity. It also corresponds to the state of Samadhi.] (88).

"Canto 5, verse no. 89 = The seventh Bhumika corresponds to the last stage called the Turiya-teet state of existence of consciousness characterized by complete spiritual realisation, enlightenment and attainment. It is the highest level of transcendental existence of the consciousness. The achievements of the Turiya state are made strong, robust and permanent in the Turiya-teet state. [Refer verse no. 86.]

It is so mystical, mysterious, enigmatic, esoteric and profound that it cannot be fathomed or known or described or grasped by either the mind or the faculty of speech. That is, what one experiences during this state of existence cannot be explained by him in words; it cannot be understood by application of the mind and its ability to analyse, rationalize and logically prove something to be true. It is simply experienced and witnessed by the spiritual aspirant himself, and not by anyone else (89)."

The *Akchu Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes the seven Bhumikas of Yoga in its Canto 2, verse nos. 27-42 in great detail. The concept of how Mukti, or spiritual liberation and deliverance, is obtained by an ascetic who follows these seven Bhumikas of Yoga have been explained in Canto 2, verse nos. 32-40.

To quote this Upanishad—

"Canto 2, verse no. 27 = When the inner self of the aspirant is prepared to accept the blessed state bliss, ecstasy and contentedness obtained by turning inwards and away from all external falsehoods and delusions of this world, it acts like a fertile ground on which small sprouts of the plant that drips Amrit, which is the elixir of eternal life and immense happiness, takes a firm root. This stage marks the onset of the first Bhumika or sign that the aspirant is ready and prepared to move ahead on the path of Yoga leading to his ultimate realisation of the Truth and Reality of creation. It is the background on which the other signposts of his spiritual

progress rest, because if this ground is not properly prepared, i.e. if he is not sincere to follow the path of self-realisation by observing the tenets of Yoga as described in this Upanishad, then all his other efforts would fall aside and crumble to pieces like a house build on weak foundation (27).

"Canto 2, verse no. 28 = As soon as the ground is prepared, i.e. as soon as the aspirant is mentally and emotionally prepared to follow the exclusive path of Yoga that would pull him away from this world and divert him towards his pure and truthful self, leading to his ultimate communion with the supreme Truth known as Brahm, the aspirant can confidently move ahead on his spiritual path and step on the other rungs of Yoga. That is, now he can achieve success in the second and third steps of the Yoga as described above (in verse nos. 10-26) (28).

"Canto 2, verse no. 29-31 = The third Bhumika[1] or state of existence of a spiritual aspirant who follows the path of this special Yoga (as described in verse nos. 15-26) is ranked amongst the best stages of Yoga because now the aspirant has abandoned all his worldly inclinations and tendencies that have their origin in his inherent nature of having numerous passions, desires and yearnings pertaining to this world and its sense objects. This is achieved by him by exercising control not only over his own self by controlling the gross sense organs as well as the subtle mind-intellect complex of his body but also by having firm faith in the teaching of the scriptures and removing all doubts, confusions and perplexities by consulting his wise moral preceptor, the Guru, with whom he has constant contact. Besides this, he lives in a secluded place in a forest where there are no chances of this world being able to entice him with all sorts of charms that might act as a bait to trap him off-guard that would lead to his spiritual downfall.

In brief, during the third state of existence of his consciousness when he loses all attractions for the world and the latter no longer charms him or has any relevance for him, an aspirant becomes oblivious of the existence of the external world and remains contented with his inner world of eternal bliss and peaceful existence. The material world with its myriad variations and ever changing nature ceases to matter for him. This in turn removes all the causes for perplexities and anxieties that normally submerge a person who is engrossed in the mundane affairs of the world. He becomes rooted in a state of constancy and uniformity where there is no sense of duality and dichotomy because nothing exists for him except his own 'self' (in the form of his pure consciousness; his Atma). His vision of existence undergoes a profound degree of metamorphosis—he begins to see oneness and non-duality in everything around him.

When this stage of total uniformity of existence is achieved, when there is a universal sense of non-duality and oneness all round, he is able to accept this world as a dream. [This is because all the different things that are seen in one's dream are false and imaginary and everyone known it as a matter of fact. When one sees a dream he remains unaffected by it and his body continues to lie motionless in sleep, motionless even though he might be an active participant in the events of the dream. Likewise, a self-realised aspirant who has understood the fact that this

world is like a dream continues to live in it and do his duties in it as destined for him, but remains completely detached from them at the physical, mental and emotional levels; his 'true self' is totally unruffled, unmoved or unaffected by anything that the body does in this world. This helps him to remain calm and indifferent not only to the deeds and their results but also to this world in which the deeds are done and in which all the sense objects are located. Inspite of all the turmoil and upheavals of mundane life, he remains markedly calm and poised.] (29-31).

[Note—[1]The term Bhumika means the stages of development of wisdom; the background, characteristics, qualities, traits, attributes or virtues that helps one to become spiritually wise and enlightened. The eclectic concept of what actually are these Bhumikas has been explained in Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, in great detail.]

"Canto 2, verse no. 32-33 = The first three Bhumikas or stages or backgrounds of Yoga are like the waking state of consciousness, while the fourth Bhumika is like the dreaming state[1].

When he progresses ahead and enters the fifth state of existence called the 'Pancham Bhumika', his sub-conscious mind ceases to remain active and becomes quiet and dysfunctional—it metaphorically vanishes from sight like the dark clouds of the rainy season that vanish during the winter season. [The dark rain-bearing clouds rumble and thunder and let out streaks of violent lightening during the rainy season. But during the winters, the sky is absolutely clean and quiet. This is used to indicate the calmness obtained by the spiritual aspirant when his mind ceases to exert any influence upon him, and when he has completely withdrawn himself from all involvements with the body and the world. This is a state of extreme neutrality and non-alignment.]

In this state of existence, only the pure consciousness remains, and since the mind has been side-lined and rendered ineffective there is no question arising for any sort of doubts and confusions requiring clarifications by the aspirant (32-33).

[Note—[1]The consciousness has five states of existence—the waking, the dreaming, the deep sleep, the Turiya and post-Turiya called Turiyateet. They have been explained in a separate appendix of this volume at the end.]

"Canto 2, verse no. 34 = The fifth Bhumika is likened to the deep sleep state of consciousness called 'Sushupta'. This is natural progression of the earlier state of consciousness (i.e. the dreaming state) and is the state when the sense of non-duality is firmly established. All causes of restlessness and perplexities are laid to rest in this fifth state of Yoga (34).

"Canto 2, verse no. 35 = In this fifth stage of Sushupta, the aspirant witnesses the fount of bliss sprouting out from his pure conscious self (because every other sort of distraction has been eliminated), and this experience gives him an extreme sense of blessedness and ecstasy (35).

"Canto 2, verse no. 36 = Although he might interact with the external world but for all practical purposes he is submerged in his own self, remaining perpetually in a state of bliss and indifference to all external involvements. This gives rise to the impression that he is careless, indolent or plain inattentive to matters of the external material world. He appears to be weary and tired of this world; he looks as if he is sleepy and acts listlessly because he is not interested

in its affairs. [This is because he is perpetually submerged in the bliss obtained in his own self, and the mundane duties of this world appear to be burdensome to him.] (36).

"Canto 2, verse no. 37 = Acquiring expertise in this stage, the spiritual aspirant moves to the next higher state of existence, i.e. he enters the sixth Bhumika of Yoga called 'Turiya'. [In this state, the sense of blessedness and bliss becomes more robust and permanent. Though this state has been achieved in the Sushupta stage as well, but now the aspirant has transcended that sate and risen higher. The earlier transient and fledgling state of Sushupta has now become permanent and robust in the sixth Bhumika. The degree of enlightenment in the Turiya state is many notches more than the earlier state. Now no cause can bring him back to the lower levels again.]

No Vasanas (worldly passions, lust, desires, yearnings and wants) have any trace in him any longer (37).

"Canto 2, verse no. 38 = In this exalted state of transcendental existence, there is no notion of Sat or Asat, or of Ahankar and non-Ahankar. [That is, now the aspirant need not distinguish between what is true and what is not for the simple reason that he lives in a state of non-duality where only one Truth lives, and it is the pure consciousness residing in his own self. That is why also there is no question of having any kind of pride and ego because such negative notions have any relevance only when one is aware of the body and its relationship with other individuals who also have a body. When there are no two entities, when everything is one indivisible non-dual Soul, the question of me being superior to him does not arise, and therefore there is no role of ego and pride.]

In this way, he becomes extremely fearless and brave. [Because now he has no enemies or competitors for him that he needs to have a false sense of self respect or a pride that has to be preserved. All are one in his enlightened eyes. Again, since a wise and enlightened person has realised that it is the body that dies and not the soul, and that the soul is his true 'self' and not the body, he overcomes the perpetual fear of death that stalks all ordinary living beings.] (38).

"Canto 2, verse no. 39 = When all the knots of the heart are untied (i.e. when all his spiritual fetters are broken and he is let off to freedom), the spiritual aspirant is said to be liberated and delivered inspite of his having a gross body and having to live in this world and do the duties assigned to him by destiny. These knots of the heart act like shackles that tie a person to this body as well as the world and its material attractions, creating in him a sense of belonging and attachment, a sense of yearning and deep longing for the enjoyment of the material comforts and pleasures of this world along with the insatiable desire for obtaining gratification for the sense organs of the body. The heart impels him to have the tendency to enjoy them and remain engrossed in them, the tendency to cling to them and grieve from their separation. All these have a combined effect of creating an emotional fetter that shackle his Atma and prevent its liberation.

So, when these knots which are like a millstone around someone's neck are done away with, all his spiritual doubts, confusions and perplexities about what is the truth and what

is not are eliminated, which is tantamount to his soul obtaining liberation and deliverance from ignorance and delusions.

Such a person is said to have obtained 'Jivan Mukti', i.e. the state of spiritual liberation and deliverance even while he is still alive in this world and has a physical body (as compared to the Videha Mukti when he sheds his mortal coil and obtains physical freedom from the fetters of the body and the horrible troubles of the world at the time of death). In this state he might remain in this world and go about his duties in a normal way, but at the emotional and sentimental level he is not involved in anything.

Thus, though he has not obtained physical liberation of the soul by the way of shedding the body as done at the time of death, called 'Nirvan' (emancipation and salvation) in the conventional terms, he is deemed to have obtained a state of exalted and divine existence that is equivalent to it and in no way less in its spiritual significance (39).

"Canto 2, verse no. 40 = His condition can be compared to a lighted lamp which has a steady flame. After successfully living in this sixth state of existence (which is called Jivan Mukta state), he finally enters the last state, the seventh Bhumika of Yoga. It is called the 'Videha Mukta' state of the consciousness. [The word 'Videha' means without a body. It has two implications—one, it refers to the higher state of Jivan Mukta when the spiritual aspirant is not at all aware even of his own body so much so that if it is beaten or burnt alive he is not aware of this event. Second, it refers to the actual shedding of the physical body as in the case of death. In both the cases, the soul is liberated and its salvation and emancipation obtained.] (40).

[Note—The sixth state of Yoga is called Jivan Mukta, while the seventh state is called Videha Mukta.]

"Canto 2, verse no. 41-42 = This most exalted and divine seventh Bhumika of Yoga is the pinnacle of spiritual achievements and it cannot be described by speech or words. This is like the outer periphery of all other Bhumikas of Yoga and marks the culmination of all Yoga efforts.

An aspirant should abandon all involvements with the world, with the body, and even too much entanglement with the scriptures. [This is not to construed as insulting the scriptures, for the hidden meaning is that once the objective of studying them is achieved, there is no point in reading them endlessly and discussing them forever just like the case when once a man passes out of college he need not read his text book daily except when he wishes to consult them when the need arises to do so and deemed necessary.]

He should instead spend more time and energy in implementing what he has learnt and experiencing the truth of the scriptures in practical terms by constantly practicing the tenets of Yoga on a regular basis.

The entire creation revealed in the form of Vishwa, Taijas and Pragya (corresponding to the three stages of existence, viz. the waking state, the dreaming state and the deep sleeping state that respectively involves the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body in this order as described in earlier verses as the first till the seventh state of Yoga) is nothing but the

same non-dual supreme transcendental all-encompassing cosmic entity known as 'Omkar'. [The word Omkar refers to the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. The latter has no attributes but the first sign of its existence is available in the form of cosmic vibrations in the ether, known as Naad or Pranav. This Naad represents the energy of Brahm in a most subtle but vast, diffused and cosmic form. It is this energy that metamorphosed itself into other forms and helped the visible world to assume the structure that it has finally acquired.] (41-42)."

The concept of seven types of Bhumikas has also been described in *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda—in Canto 4, verse nos. 1.3-1.11. This Canto is divided into two sections like the Vedas—the first section is the Mantras, and the second is the Brahman. There are in all 42 Mantras in section 1 which list the seven Bhumikas (stages of development of wisdom), while the second section consisting of 43 verses are like the Braham which give a detailed description of all the stages. It, inter alia, describes the concept of Jivan Mukti, and cites the examples of sage Shuka and Vamdeo as epitomes of this type of Mukti.

Let us see the Mantra part, i.e. the first section, and what it has to say on the subject—

"Verse no. 1.3 = People with seven types of 'Bhumikas' are deemed to be Jivan Mukta (1.3).

[Note—Refer also to Canto 5, verse nos. 74-75 of the present Varaaha Upanishad. The Akchu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 29-40, describe this concept of Bhumika in the context of Yoga.]

"Verse no. 1.4 = The first Bhumika is to have 'Shubhecha'—i.e. to have auspicious, righteous, holy and noble desires, wishes, expectations, hopes and aspirations. [Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 1.41 and 3 of Canto 4.] (1.4).

"Verse no. 1.5 = The second Bhumika is 'Vichaarna'—i.e. to consider, ponder and contemplate. [Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 1.42 and 4 of Canto 4.] (1.5).

"Verse no. 1.6 = The third Bhumika is 'Tanumanusi'—i.e. to think deeply, have deep insight and penetrating foresight; to have a sharp and analytical mind that can view things clinically and be able to analytically and surgically dissect them to come to the truth, to be able to analyse things in the correct perspective, to be able to use wisdom, intelligence and analytical abilities of the mind judiciously to deduce the truth and reality of things correctly and consequentially arrive at the correct conclusion. [Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 1.14 and 5 of Canto 4.] (1.6).

"Verse no. 1.7 = The fourth Bhumika is 'Satwa' or 'Satya'—i.e. to be able to distinguish between the truth and non-truth, to be able to separate the half truth from the half false, to be able to distinguish between the half truth and the full truth, or to be able to discriminate between the apparent truth and the absolute truth. It is to think of that entity which has a truthful and real existence, and discard that which is not so. [Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 2 and 6 of Canto 4.] (1.7).

"Verse no. 1.8 = The fifth Bhumika is 'Anaasakta'—i.e. the ability to be sincerely free from all attachments, attractions, infatuations and entanglements of all kinds; to remain exemplarily detached, dispassionate and indifferent towards everything and everyone in this world. [Refer

also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 2 and 7 of Canto 4.] (1.8).

"Verse no. 1.9 = The sixth Bhumika is 'Padaartha Bhavana'—i.e. to having absolutely no concern about material things; to remain oblivious of even the existence of any material things in this world which are not true and do not have any spiritual value in them; giving no thought to anything or substance in this creation except the Absolute Truth personified as the supreme transcendental Brahm who is the Ishwar or the Lord of creation, and seeing this Lord in everything in existence. It also entails never to think that this thing is good and that is bad, this is obtainable and that is not, this is beneficial and that is not, because the same ubiquitous and universal Brahm uniformly pervades in all the things of this creation. [Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 8-9 of Canto 4.] (1.9).

"Verse no. 1.10 = The seventh Bhumika is 'Turiya'—i.e. to live perpetually in a blissful state of consciousness that transcends the third stage of Sushupta which is the deep sleep state of this consciousness. [Refer also to Varaaha Upanishad, verse nos. 2 and 10 of Canto 4.] (1.10).

"Verse no. 1.11 = This seventh Bhumika is akin to the stage of meditation when the ascetic hears the cosmic ethereal sound called Pranav or OM resonating in his entire being. [The vibrations from this cosmic sound help to massage his nerves so as to make him experience an extreme sense of ecstasy which gives him a lot of spiritual thrill, peace and bliss which cannot be measured.]

This ethereal sound of cosmic Pranav or OM has four Bhumikas or components represented by the letters A, U and M followed by the Chandra Bindu (the dot-and-crescent-moon placed on a letter to produce the nasal sound resembling the hum of the bumble bee) (1.11).

"Verse no. 1.35 = An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the first three forms of Bhumikas (verse no. 1.4—1.6) is said to be a 'Mumuksha', i.e. one who desires to be liberated and delivered (1.35).

"Verse no. 1.36 = [Verse no. 1.36—1.39 describe the four levels or categories of 'Brahm Vettas'—i.e. the hierarchy of those who are said to be experts in the principles of Brahm.]

An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the fourth form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.7) is said to be a 'Brahm Vetta', i.e. one who is deemed to be well-versed in the esoteric knowledge pertaining to the supreme transcendental Brahm (1.36).

"Verse no. 1.37 = An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the fifth form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.8) is said to be an exalted and honoured one who is given greater respect than ordinary Brahm Vettas, i.e. those who are experts in the knowledge and principles pertaining to Brahm (1.37).

"Verse no. 1.38 = An ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the sixth form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.9) is said to be senior than the second type of Brahm Vettas, and are more exalted and honourable in the hierarchy of Brahm Vettas, i.e. he is senior

and more respected in the hierarchy of Brahm Vettas (1.38).

"Verse no. 1.39 = Finally, an ascetic who lives a life characterised by the predominance of the seventh form of Bhumika (verse no. 1.10) is said to be the most exalted and most honoured amongst all the Brahm Vettas. He is the senior-most amongst them all (1.39).

"Verse no. 1.40 = In this regard there is the following Shloka (verse of the scriptures) which states as follows—(1.40).

"Verse no. 1.41 = The first Bhumika is 'Subha Iccha' which pertains to auspicious thoughts. It is the foundation for Gyan, or truthful knowledge, erudition and wisdom. [That is, only when he has auspicious thoughts emerging in his mind can he expect to acquire knowledge of the Divine and Truth. Otherwise, he would be more contented with the illusionary charms of the world and remain submerged in self gratification. Refer also to verse nos. 1.4 and 3 of the present Canto 4.] (1.41).

"Verse no. 1.42 = The second Bhumika is 'Vichaarna' which is to seriously think, consider, ponder and contemplate upon something. [Refer verse nos. 1.5 and 4 of the present Canto 4.]

The third Bhumika is 'Tanumansi' which is to think deeply, have deep insight and foresight; to have a sharp and analytical mind that can view things clinically and surgically dissect them to come to the truth, to be able to analyse things in the correct perspective, to be able to use wisdom, intelligence and analytical abilities of the mind judiciously to deduce the truth and reality of things correctly and consequentially arrive at the correct conclusion. [Refer verse nos. 1.6 and 5 of the present Canto 4.] (1.42).

"Verse no. 2 = The fourth Bhumika is Satya, and it is to think of that entity which is has a truthful and real existence, and discard that which is not so. It also refers to the ability to distinguish between the truth and non-truth, or to be able to discriminate between the apparent truth and the absolute truth. [Refer verse nos. 1.7 and 6 of the present Canto 4.]

The fifth Bhumika is 'Anaasakta', and it refers to the ability to be sincerely free from all attachments, attractions, infatuations and entanglements of all kinds; to remain exemplarily detached, dispassionate and indifferent towards everything and everyone in this world. [Refer verse nos. 1.8 and 7 of the present Canto 4.]

The sixth Bhumika is 'Padaartha Bhavana', and it refers to having absolutely no concern about material things; to remain oblivious of even the existence of any material things in this world which are not true and do not have any spiritual value in them; giving no thought to anything or substance in this creation except the supreme transcendental Brahm known as the Ishwar or the Lord of this creation, and seeing the Lord in everything in existence. It also entails never to think that this thing is good and that is bad, this is obtainable and that is not, this is beneficial and that is not, because the same ubiquitous and universal Brahm uniformly pervades in all the things of this creation. [Refer verse nos. 1.9 and 8-9 of the present Canto 4.]

And finally, the seventh Bhumika is 'Turiya', and it refers to live perpetually in a blissful state of consciousness that transcends the third stage of Sushupta which is the deep sleep state

of consciousness. [Refer verse nos. 1.10 and 10 of the present Canto 4.] (refer verse no. 1.10) (2).

(b) The *four types of Bhumikas* have been described in *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda in its Canto 5, verse no. 71-75. To quote—

"Verse no. 71-72 = This Mantra of Pranav or Brahm, viz. OM, is potent enough to eliminate all spiritual obstacles.

There are four Bhumikas (stages of development of spiritual wisdom as described in detail in Canto 4)—viz. (i) 'Aarambha'—the beginning or initiation when one decides that he would find true wisdom and the correct path that would provide him with final emancipation and salvation; (ii) 'Ghat'—the acceptance and the subsequent filling of the inner self with noble thoughts and wisdom, becoming stable, calm, quiet, unmoving and unruffled like the air present inside an empty pitcher; (iii) 'Parichaya'—introduction to, becoming aware of and getting acquainted with the cosmic Divinity that is present inside one's inner-self as the all-powerful consciousness known as the Atma; introduction to and acquaintance with the highly evolved and developed path of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom that enables an aspirant to become aware of his pure conscious self and the fact that this 'self' of his is the same as the cosmic 'Self' of creation that is known as the all-pervading and almighty Consciousness that universally resides in the bosom of all living beings as their 'self', and that this is the only spiritual Truth in this existence [71], and (iv) 'Nishpati'—completion or consummation of this process which implies the hearing of the cosmic Naad and tasting of the elixir of eternal bliss and ecstasy, known as Amrit, that comes with self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, and reaching the final frontier of spiritual practice which culminates in obtaining liberation and deliverance of the soul, the final emancipation and salvation whereby the individual soul merges with the supreme Soul of the cosmos, never to take birth again. This is the ultimate goal which any wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant would yearn for, would strive for, would aspire for and endeavour to attain.

Now each of these four stages is being elaborated upon. The 'beginning or initiation' is when the spiritual aspirant abandons all his involvement with the external world and its activities that have three causes[1] for coming into being [72]. (71-72).

[Note—[1]The three causes that on the one hand result in the creation of the world and on the other hand can find a solution for this malady itself are the following—(i) Upaadaan—the word means 'acceptance, acquisition, knowledge; restraining of the sense organs; a material from which something is prepared, the ingredient'. All these connotations can be applied here. For instance, the man first acquires the knowledge of this external material world and all its sense objects, and then accepts its existence as a matter of fact. Since the existence of this world is based on belief and information, and since this world can be accepted only through the medium of the sense organs of the body, it can be eliminated by the same means. That is, elimination of the deluding and artificial world can be achieved only by acquisition of correct knowledge and beliefs along with practicing restriction of the sense organs. These organs are responsible for the man becoming aware of the existence of the world and its most alluring charms, no matter how illusionary or transient or painful they are in the long run. They entangle him

in their web and tie him down in a vice-like grip with false promises of happiness, pleasure and comfort. If a man falls prey to this bait, he is trapped, while if he has the right knowledge and wisdom he would see right through the trick and avert a catastrophic destiny for himself.

(ii) Asamvaachi—to attempt to unite two dissimilar things into one entity; to try in futility to bring harmony between two basically disharmonious entities. For instance, it is like trying to unite water with fire. In the present case, this would mean to imagine something to be true although it is fundamentally and irrefutably false. That is, to imagine that this world is true and that it would indeed give peace and happiness is as incredulous and ridiculous to believe as imagining that the water seen in a desert mirage would actually quench one's thirst. As is obvious here, this utterly fallacious and basically erroneous conception can be removed only by correct knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment that comes with study of the scriptures and good company of saints and other holy men.

(iii) Nimitta—the word means 'motive, cause, reason, factor etc. which is the progenitor of something or some event; something done on behalf, or on account of'. For instance, the potter is the creator of the clay pot; he is a means by which the formless clod of earth is given a definitive shape, design and size. So if there was no potter, there would be no pot with this shape or size. In the present context, the spiritual aspirant researches the cause of the coming into being of this world although it is universally accepted in the scriptures that it is false and illusionary. He wanders how this happens—one the one hand it is false, and on the other hand he can actually experience and witness the presence of the gross world first hand thereby proving that it does not exist. It is then that he begins to ponder on the great metaphysical doctrines and axiomatic maxims enshrined in the scriptures, and espoused and expounded by them repeatedly. Regular and discreet study of the scriptures with an open mind and a sincere desire to learn and benefit from their teachings helps the man to discover the hidden 'truth' that cannot be seen by the physical eye of the body. He finds that it is his imaginative mind that has visualized this world to appease the sense organs. Therefore the remedy is also in the mind itself—and it is to stop imagining and become real. The mind, the aspirant realises, has to be leashed in and channelised properly to derive real spiritual benefit from its stupendous powers that were being misused by it in pursuance of falsehood and artificiality known as the world. He discovers that what is seen, heard, felt, smelt and tasted is not always the 'real and irrefutable truth' of any thing or event. If is often misleading and far from the actual thing. For instance, the water in the mirage seen in the hot desert is very evident, but everyone knows that there is no water in it. Similarly, vested interests spread false rumors about certain things to suit their purpose, but it would be highly foolish to rely on them. When one suffers from high fever one feels extremely chilly though it may be a hot summer day with a scorching sun beating relentlessly down on earth. A sick man may not be able to relish any taste in food which might be as delicious and tasty as it can ever be for a healthy man. Artificial scents create an impression of fragrant flowers in the vicinity though there may be none nearby.]

"Verse no. 73 = Instead (of being outwardly and extrovert, instead of allowing his sense organs to run after their objects in the external world), a wise and enlightened aspirant should concentrate upon the activities that are related to the inner-self, and focus on its purification and enhancement. He should endeavour to turn the focus of his mind and intelligent inwards in researching the truth about his own 'self' and the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides in his own bosom as his Atma.

The vital winds of the body control all its functions and activities, both the external ones as well as the internal ones. Therefore it is of utmost importance to control and harness them. [That is, all the organs and tissues function under the influence of the vital winds. If one wind fails, the relevant organ or tissue suffers and stops to function properly. In other words, the tendency of the organs of perception to be outwardly can be effectively checked if one can check the relevant vital wind. Refer *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad*, verse no. 11 as well as this Canto 5 of the present Varaaha Upanishad which describe how Pran is controlled. So if a person is able to check all the vital winds, he can put a tight leash on this entire body and control even the involuntary actions such as digestion and hunger, circulation of blood and breathing, passage of stool and urine, etc. The mind would be then freed from the constant bombardment of impulses that are gathered by the organs and the necessity of issuing constant guidance to them. Then the freed mind would have the time and the inclination to concentrate its energy and strength on achieving successes in higher goals of life. That is why great emphasis is laid on first controlling of the vital winds during Yoga, because without this nothing worthwhile is achievable.]

When the vital winds are controlled and put under tight leash, the spiritual aspirant is able to overcome all hurdles and become stabilized in his body (i.e. is able to overcome the natural tendency of the body to remain restless and fidgety) just like the air inside a pitcher is stable and unmoving as compared to the air present outside the pitcher[1] (73).

[Note—[1]This is the first Bhumika. This entails turning away from being extrovert and preventing one's sense organs from being outwardly mobile, and instead become focused on the inner self. It means to control the organs of the body and the mind to get naturally attracted by the charms proffered by the material objects of the external world, and instead concentrate their combined energy on realising the stupendous potentials of the 'self' and the pure conscious Atma.

The various Bhumikas have been described in detail also in Canto 4 of the present Varaaha Upanishad.]

"Verse no. 74 = Those who are experts in this spiritual field, are wise and erudite, call the stage when an aspirant is able to control his vital airs and thereby become self-controlled, self-restrained, serene, unruffled, calmed and tranquil, symbolically indicating the attainment of a high degree of stability and steadfastness which are absolute necessary pre-requisites for success in any endeavour, what to speak of spiritual endeavour which is all the more difficult and painstaking as compared to worldly successes. It indicates steadiness of purpose, calmness of demeanours, a settled mind and fully restrained organs of the body—i.e. a stage when the spiritual aspirant has been able do away with all the restlessness and the fickleness that are so

typical of the mind and the body.

This is called the 'Ghat Bhumika'[1] which marks a significant progress in his quest for spiritual enhancement, and attainment of final liberation and deliverance (74).

[Note—[1]The Ghat Bhumika has two connotations as follows. (i) When the spiritual aspirant has become steady in mind and body, he is said to have attained the exalted stage which is compared with the Kumbhak phase of Pranayam when the winds are steadily held inside the body which is completely steady, calm and unmoving with all external exit points, such as the nostrils and anus, being closed. The man then becomes focused on his inner-self in the absence of all external disturbances, instead of routinely running outwards towards the sense objects of the material world.

(ii) There is another connotation to this symbolism as indicated by the word 'Ghat' which means a pitcher or vessel. The air inside the closed confines of this Ghat is completely calm and still; it is not all affected by the strong gust of wind blowing outside the body of the Ghat. So, the Ghat Bhumika refers to the stable state of the aspirant's mind and body which is comparable to the steadiness and calmness of the air inside the pitcher as compared to the ever agile, ever mobile and ever fickle nature of the air present outside the body of the pitcher. The spiritual aspirant becomes absolutely calm and quietened as he has reached the higher stages of Yoga and has sufficiently advanced in his spiritual quest. The turmoil of the external world does not disturb him in the least. Even as the air inside the pitcher remains calm and unmoving inspite of a fierce storm raging outside the pitcher, the aspirant remains calm, serene, indifferent and in quietude inspite of the turbulent world outside. He is absolutely unruffled and exemplarily unconcerned and detached from everything.]

[2]The Ghat Bhumika is the second Bhumika.]

"Verse no. 75 = It is the Atma, the pure consciousness and the true 'self' of the ascetic, that is responsible for creation of this world through the medium of the body consisting of both the gross organs such as the organs of perceptions and organs of action, as well as the subtle organ of the mind-intellect complex. Hence, being the creator or progenitor of this creation (world), it is the Atma itself which can conclude it or bring it to an end, and no body else.

Therefore, the stage when the spiritual aspirant has realised this quintessential truth about the Atma vis-à-vis the body and the world is said to be Jivan Mukta—i.e. one who has obtained liberation and deliverance even while he is alive, has kept his gross body, and lives normally in this world. [This is because he would not be 'personally' involved with either the activities of the body or the world. The word 'personally' here would not mean his body but his Atma which would remain a mute spectator and non-involved with everything and in anything. It is like freeing oneself from the serfdom of the body as well as the world. The Atma disassociates itself from everything related to the gross and perishable body as well as the equally gross and perishable world.][1]

When this thinking and behaviour becomes natural to the aspirant, when it is not artificially done by him to gain praise and honour, when he is not acting as an imposter trying to pose as an upright, wise, self-realised and enlightened man to deceive others with ulterior motives,

when he has no pretensions of being holy and pious man while slyly eyeing this world and its material objects which would be showered upon him by faithful devotees who would fall prey to his deceitful behaviour—it is then that he is said to have accomplished complete success in obtaining his spiritual objectives. He is fulfilled and complete; he has obtained the 'Nishpati Bhumika' which is the last of the four Bhumikas and the culmination of Yoga and spiritual practice[2]. (75).

[Note—[1]This awareness of the Truth is the third Bhumika called the 'Parichaya Bhumika'.

[2]This 'Nishpat Bhumika' is the fourth Bhumika. Refer verse no. 71-72.]

(24) Scientific View :- It will be recalled that the general refrain of all the Upanishadic teachings, put in a simple language, is that the creation, whether at the macro-level as the myriad and vast cosmos or at the micro-level as an individual creature, has emerged from a single entity which the Upanishads prefer to call 'Braham'. After emergence, the cosmos expanded and bloomed like a flower does from its bud. It was left to itself by Brahm to take its own course of evolution and take independent decisions regarding its day-to-day affairs. But this independence was not total and unregulated— for everything was subject to certain basic laws and regulatory forces of nature which imperceptibly controlled every movement, every action in this world. As a feedback, it gave the doer of those actions rewards or punishments which were in consonant with the type of action, good or bad. This acted as a means to check and balance reckless behaviour and maintain the equilibrium of nature. But this evolutionary process will end one day, a day which is called the final judgment day, or the annihilation of all that exists. Everything will then merge back into its primary origin, the Brahm. At the micro-level it is called the ultimate salvation of the soul, and at the macro-level it is the dooms-day scenario.

Now, one wonders whether what the scriptures say has any scientific validity and support. Let us look at what the cosmologists say in this regard. They tell us that at the macro-level, the universe came into existence some 14 billion years ago following a tremendous explosion called the 'Big Bang' which hurled everything away from its point of origin. They also tell us that billions of years into the future, the outward movement of the stars and galaxies etc. would ultimately slow down and eventually halt when gravitational forces would start pulling everything back inside once again into the singularity it was born of. This is called the 'Big Crunch'.

Closer home at the micro-level, geologists tell us that 200 million years ago, the continents were joined together in one gigantic land mass called 'Pangea'. In due course of time, the forces of continental drift slowly spread them away into their present state. The process will one day reverse until sometimes around 250 million years from now, the continents will again fuse into one another. This will result in the reformation of a huge land mass called 'Pangea Ultima'. Consequentially, North and South America will have slammed into continental

Europe; Africa and Australia into continental Asia; Antarctica into southern Australia. The Atlantic Ocean will cease to exist while the Indian Ocean will become a large inland lake.

Therefore, it is a natural phenomenon of life that everything that emerges and comes into being will end one day. The beginning and the end are from a singular source which the Upanishads call the supreme Brahm.

——*—*

'You cannot discover the purpose of life by asking someone else; the only way you'll ever get the right answer is by asking yourself'— The Quote Garden.

Oh those with similar high wisdom, knowledge, erudition and scholarship—get up, rise up! (Rig Veda, 10/101/1). Even as an ocean is crossed with a ship, let the Lord take us across the ocean-like world for our welfare and good. Let our sins be destroyed. (Rig Veda 1/17/8). 'He who is the source of life and power, whose commands all beings, including the Gods, obey, whose shadow is immortality as well as death —we give our oblations to that supreme Lord whom we adore' (Rig Veda, 10/121/2).

Truth is obtained by faith and conviction, which in turn is obtained by the grace of the Lord; grace is obtained by consecration, and the latter is obtained by sincere self-dedication. (Yajur Veda, 19/30). A man crosses over (the ocean or the hurdle known as) 'death' simply by realising (coming to understand the essence, true nature and reality of) the supreme, transcendental Brahm (Yajur Veda, 31/18). The eternal and omnipresent Lord, in whom the entire universe finds its refuge, is known by the learned and wise ones with their eyes of wisdom and enlightenment. At the time of final conclusion of the universe, all things get dissolved in that supreme Lord, and at the time of a new creation it emerges from him. He exists everywhere in all the creations uniformly. [Yajur Veda, 32/8] Let our mind-intellect-heart be ever involved in the worship of the Lord. Let us be diligent towards experiencing the realisation of the Lord. (Yajur Veda 11/2)

'Ishwar is the Atma as seen and/or grasped by the mind. His highest name is OM. So repeat it, meditate on it and think of all its wonderful nature and attributes. Repeating the OM continually is the only true worship. It is not a word, it is God himself' — Swami Vivekanand (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekanand, 9 vols, 7/62).

'That was the true light, which lighteth everyman that cometh into the world' (St. John, 1/9). 'I am the first and the last; the beginning and the end'. (Holy Bible, Revelation, 22/13).

'The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of thing but their inward significance.' —Aristotle.

****

About the Author: **Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia:**

Full address of Author—36-A, Rajghat Colony, Parikrama Marg,
P.O.—Ayodhya, Pin—224123
Distt.—Faizabad, U.P. India.
Mobile: +919451290400 (whatsapp + voice call); +919935613060 (voice call)

Website: < www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com >
Email of Author: (i) < ajaichhawchharia@gmail.com >
(ii) < ajaikumarbooks@gmail.com >
Facebook ID < www.facebook.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia8 >
Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/AjaiKumarChhawchharia

NOTE: Author's Books are available at:—

(1) www.amazon.com in its Kindle + Paper-Back Print Editions.
(2) www.pothi.com in a Print edition.
(3) www.draft2digital.com and its various vendors' platforms in E-Book edition:
URL: https://www.draft2digital.com/ajaikumarchhawchharia
(4) www.tulsidas-ram-books.weebly.com
(5) Archive.org: https://archive.org/details/@ajai_kumar_chhawchharia
(6) Goodreads: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/991710.Ajai_Kumar_Chhawchharia

There are countless books based on Indian scriptures and their spiritual, metaphysical and theological principles written in English by Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia with a missionary zeal as his humble service to his beloved Lord Sri Ram.

These books are a 'book lover's dream come true' and stand out heads-over-shoulders in the realm of metaphysical, philosophical, devotional, spiritual and classical literature of India. Such as for example, there are Goswami Tulsidas' myriad works with Sri Ram as the central theme which are glittering like gems, poetically told, stupendous in beauty, marvelously narrated and contain a treasury of fathomless wisdom and deep insight into spiritualism, metaphysics and philosophy. Then there is Veda Vyas' glorious narration of the epic story of Sri Ram in Adhyatma Ramayan and Devi Puran Maha Bhagwat Ramayan. The Upanishads represent the epitome of Indian philosophical, metaphysical and spiritual treatises— the marvellous highest pinnacle that human thought can possibly reach. They are acclaimed the world over as highly evolved and intellectually enlightening books. The Vedas, on the other hand, are believed to be

revealed books. The two form the two legs of Hinduism.

The author has presented a simple, day to day bilingual version (Hindi and English) of these stupendous texts. A huge array of information on Sri Ram and Hanuman culled from the Vedas, Upanishads. Purans, and myriad other sources have been systematically presented by the author in lucid, florid, easy flowing, vibrant and captivating English language— useful to a layman, a devotee, curious people, research scholars, casual as well as serious readers, plain book lovers or connoisseurs of classical literature. A must read for everyone.

All the books have original text with line-to-line easy flowing English version with necessary explanatory notes, appendices, etc.

The list of books are as follows:

Detailed English versions with commentary on Books of 'Goswami Tulsidas':

* Vairagya Sandipani of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Vinai Patrika of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Geetawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Kavitawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Dohawali of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Janki Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Ram Lala Nahachu of Goswami Tulsidas
* Parvati Mangal of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Barvai Ramayan of Goswami Tulsidas.
* Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (Canto 1) [The other 6 Cantos, i.e. Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, Lanka Kand, and Uttar Kand, are in the process of writing, and would be made available, one by one, as soon as they are ready for publication.]

Detailed English Books based on original texts of Goswami Tulsidas, with extensive commentary:

* Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka Told in Slow Motion: in 2 Volumes (5Parts)
* 'Sundar Kand' of Ram Charit Manas
* The Kaagbhusund Ramayan or The Aadi Ramayan
* The Divine Story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati (based on Ram Charit Manas, Parvati Mangal & Vinai Patrika)
* Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Ram Charit Manas).
* Ram Geeta: The Gospel of Lord Ram.
* A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name.

Other Books on the theme of Lord Ram:
* Glory of Lord Ram's Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns
* Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Strotras & Mantras of Lord Ram.
* Upanishads dedicated to Lord Ram & their Philosophy.
* Saint Surdas' "Ram Charitawali".
* The Chariot of God—Dharma Rath.
* Bhakti—Devotion for Lord God.
* Saints and Non-Saints, Their Character and Comparison.
* 'Ram Charit Manas' (the holy lake containing the ambrosia in the form of the divine story describing the deeds and acts of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being upon earth) by Goswami Tulsidas—full text with English introduction.
* Life sketch of Goswami Tulsidas.

The Trilogy of Books on the epic known as the 'Ramayan':
* English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
* English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
* English rendering of Devi Puran's Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

English Books dedicated to Lord Shiva:
* Book 1= Marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati
* Book 2= Sacred Hymns of Lord Shiva.
* Book 3= Lord Shiva—His legend, Upanishads, Puran, Hymns & Parvati Mangal.

A Book in English dedicated to Lord Hanuman:
* The Legendary Glory of Hanuman.

English Books explaining various spiritual and metaphysical concepts based on the Upanishads:
* A True Guru (The Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor).
* Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation.
* The Triumvirate of Creation: According to the Upanishads.
* The 'Pentagon of Creation'—The Panch Tattvas, Panch Bhuts, Panch Prans & Panch Koshas.
* Revelation of Creation as envisioned in the Upanishads.
***** YOGA—Its Practice & Philosophy according to the Upanishads.
* Who is a Guru?
* The 24 Avtaars (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu.
***** The Viraat Purush—the cosmic, all-embracing form of the Supreme Being: as conceived in the Upanishads, Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, and Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas.

* OM and NAAD: the cosmic revelation of Super Consciousness extensively explained and compiled from the Upanishads.
* Vaak (spoken word), Akshar (alphabet) & Sristi (creation).
* The concept of 'Kalaa'.
* 'Brahm' in the eyes of the Upanishads.
* 'Sanyas' with 'Vairagya Shatkam' of Bhartihari.
* The 'Mahavakyas' (Great Sayings) of the Upanishads.
* The 'Tattwas' (elements) and the Gunas (qualities) According to the Upanishads.
* The Fundamental Elements and Character Traits of Creation as Enunciated in the Upanishads {available only on www.draft2digital.com }
* The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

Other English Books on Hinduism and its Spiritual Philosophy (by Ajai kumar Chhawchharia):

* Bhakti Sutra Mala
* Shandilya Bhakti Sutra
* Narad Bhakti Sutra
* 'Vairagya Shatkam' of king-sage Bhartrihari.
* The great ancient sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of India.
* The great sages, seers, saints and enlightened kings of ancient India {available only on www.draft2digital.com }
* 'Arunachal Pancharatna & Rudra Ashtak'. {In English, co-produced by Rev. Janardan Kalianand-Swami of USA and Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.}

***Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition**.

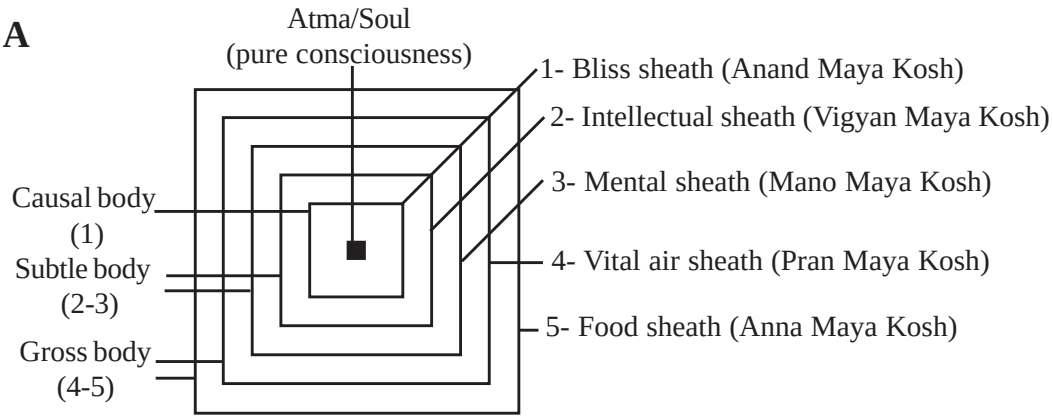
Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads;

NOTE: A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas' is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

---------********--------

Diagram of various sheaths and three bodies of the creature

A



B

Food Sheath (Physical Body)

Organs of perception
1- Eyes; 2- Ears; 3- Nose;
4- Skin; 5- Tongue

Organs of Action
1- Hands; 2- Legs; 3- Mouth;
4- Genitals; 5- Anus/excretion organs

C

Vital Air Sheath (Panch Pran)

1- Faculty of perception (Pran)—It controls all the perceptions

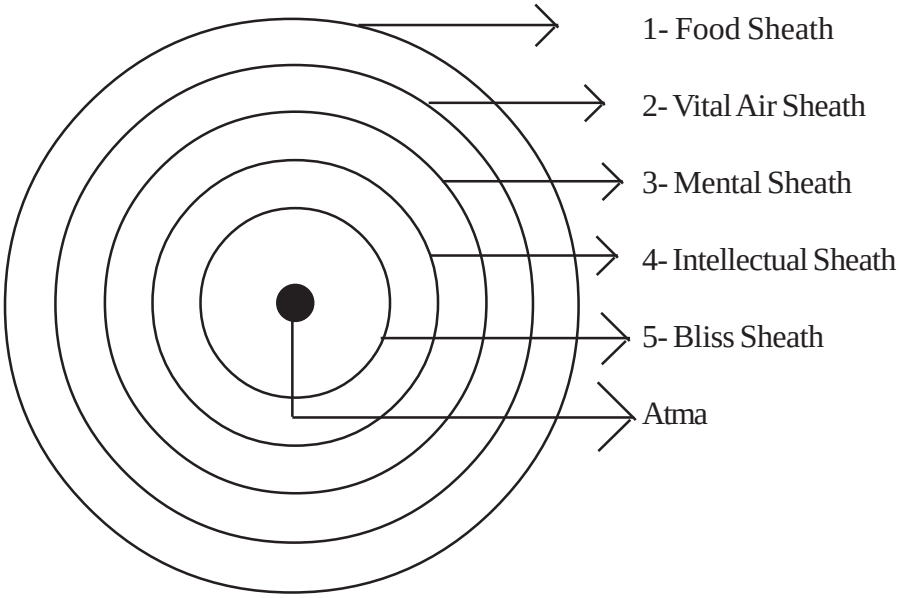
2- Faculty of excretion (Apaan)—Controls excretion

3- Faculty of digestion (Samaan)—Controls digestion and equilibrium in body

4- Faculty of circulation (Vyaan)—Power by which food is used and circulated and distributed in the whole body

5- Faculty of thinking (Udaan)—Capacity to acqure, assimilate, absob and filter through knowledge and thought

The 5 Sheaths and Atma



Merging of Microcosmic Soul with Macrocosmic Soul

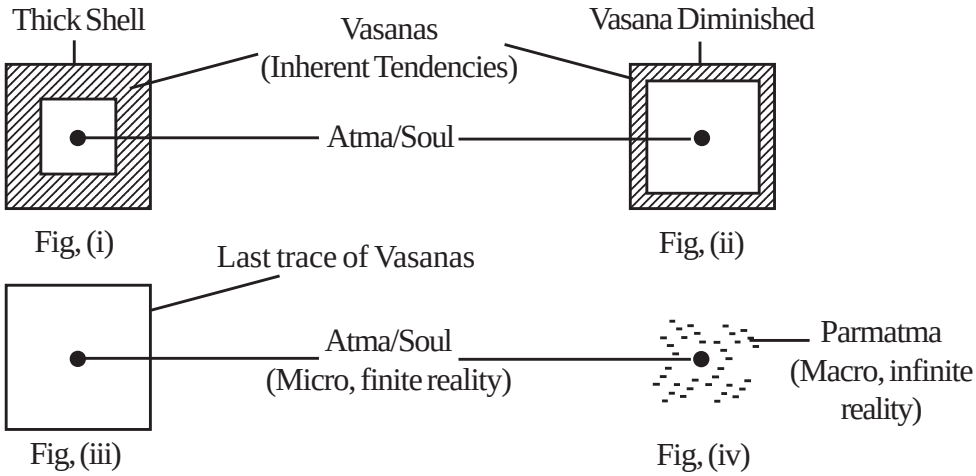


Figure shows how Atma merges with Parmatma by controlling Vasanas or Vrittis

1

Functioning of Pure Consciousness

'Pure Consciousness' Functioning through

A

- Gross Body is waker (Vishwa)
- Subtle Body is dreamer (Taizasa)
- Causal Body is deep sleeper (Pragna)

'Microcosmic' (Individual creature)

B

- Total of Gross body is Viraat
- Total of Subtle body is Hiranya Garbha
- Total of Causal body is Ishwar

'Macrocosmic' (The all-pervading Supreme Lord)

2

Diagram depicting how Microcosm merges with Macrocosm

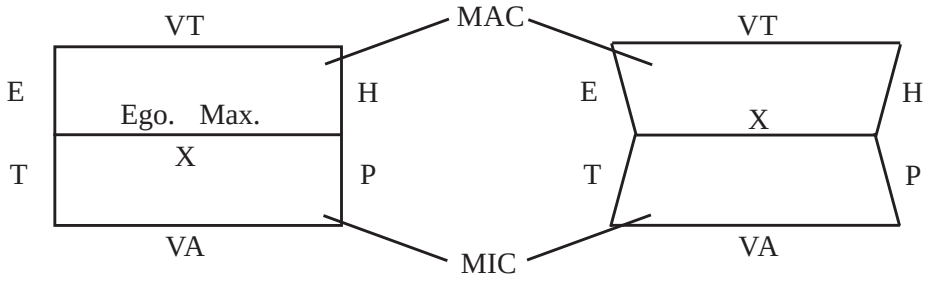


Fig (i) Fig (ii)

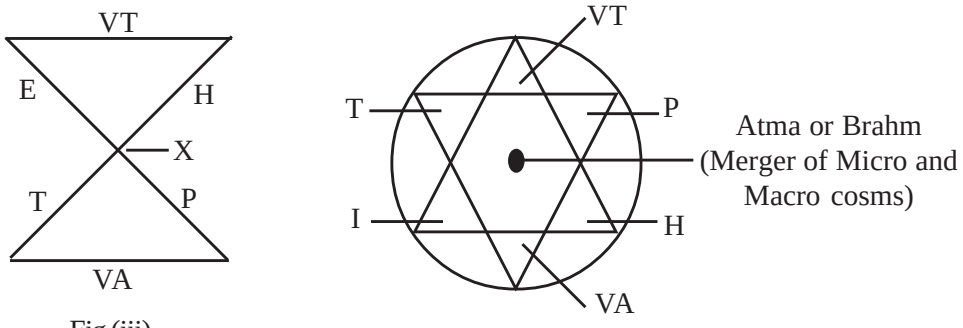
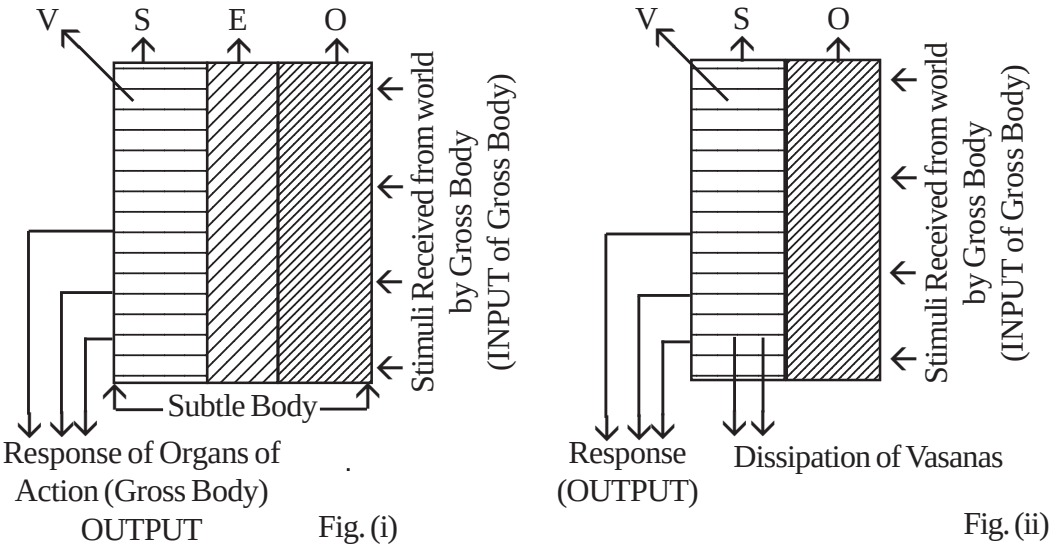


Fig (iii) Fig (iv)

Key— VT = Viraat (Cosmic waker); VA = Vishwa (Waker); P = Pragna (Deep sleeper); T = Taijasa (Dreamer); H = Hiranya Garbha (Cosmic dreamer); I = Ishwar (Cosmic deep sleeper; X = Inherent tendency or demarcation line representing 'perceiver-feeler-thinker-doer'; Amta = Microcosmic pure self of individual; Brahm = Macrocosmic Soul of the universe; MAC = Macrocosm; MIC = Microcosm;

Diagram showing how Ego and desires effect the Mind



Key— S = Subjective Subtle Body (Intellect); O = Objective Subtle Body (Mind);
V = Vasanas (Inherent Tendencies or Inclinations); E = Ego/Desires

Explanation :- The stimuli received by the objective mind is passed to the subjective mind (intellect) through the constant interference of ego (Ahankar). Hence, while taking a decision, the intellect (Buddhi = बुद्धि) is influenced by the intervening ego (refer figure no. 1)

When ego is removed, there is direct coordination between the mind and the intellect and the former receives proper guidance from the latter. When actions are performed without interference by ego, no fresh Vasanas are deposited in the intellect. Those already present gradually dissipate away. In due course of time, the intellect is freed of all the Vasanas as well (refer figure no. 2).

This helps in purging of all the impurities associated with the soul and enveloping it like a layer or veil. When the veil is removed, the magnificence and brilliance of pure consciousness illuminates the creature.

As is clear from the above diagram, when the ego and desire—which form the basic ingredients of the inherent tendencies of a creature— are dissipated by industrious effort, the pure Atma residing in the 3rd sheath (the causal body) of the creature can directly interact with the Intellect (the subjective subtle body) of the creature. This intellect is not now subject to any interference from Vasanas (fig. ii), and can act independently. The actions become pure, uncorrupted and scrupulous. The emphasis here is to put the intellect directly under the command of the Atma/soul without the interference of Vasanas, ego, desires and other inherent tendencies or inclinations that mire the soul as a result of (a) its past deeds and their results and (b) unfulfilled desires.

PERSONALITY OF MAN

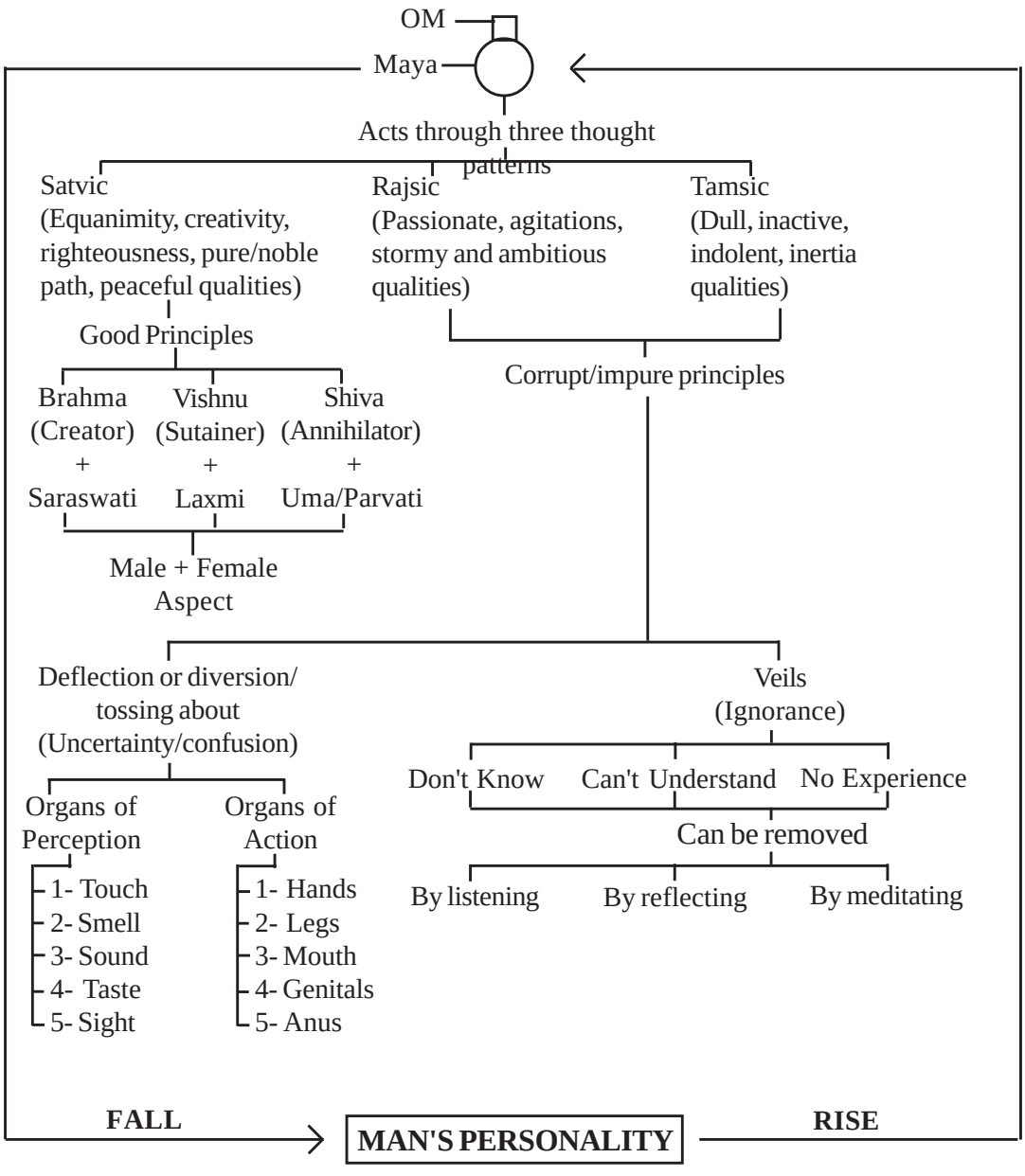


Diagram showing the predominance of the five elements and their patron Gods in the Body

(refer verse nos. 4-6, Canto 8, Jabaldarshano-panishad)

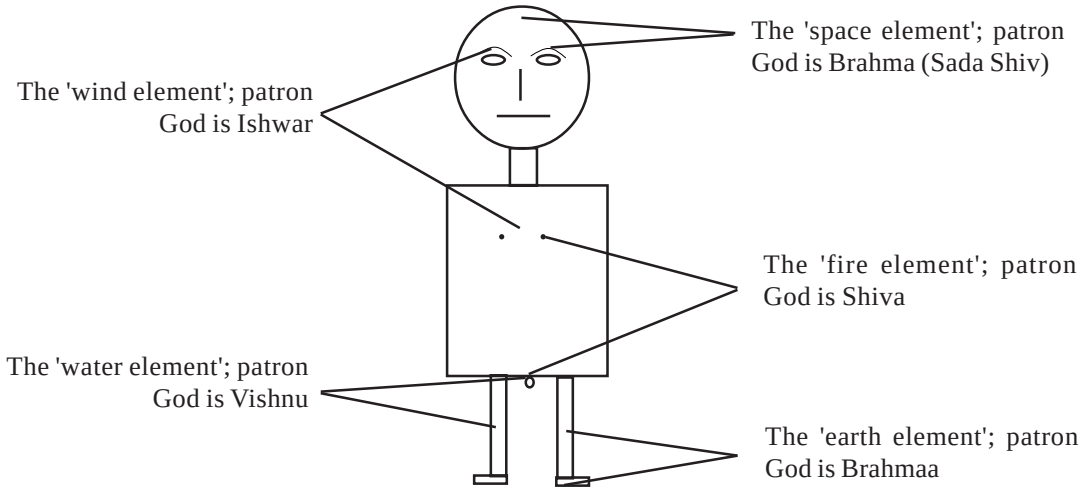


Diagram showing the predominance of the five elements and their shape and colour in the Body

(refer verse nos. 2/135-141 Trishikhi Brahmano-panishad)

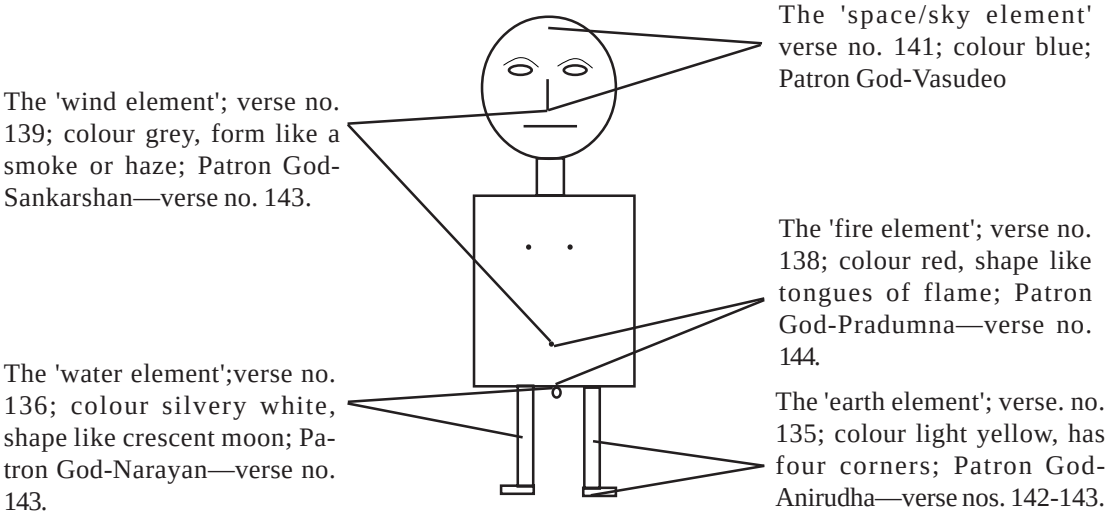


Diagram of Creation of the World from Viraat Purush

(Adhyatma Ramayan—Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos.63-69)

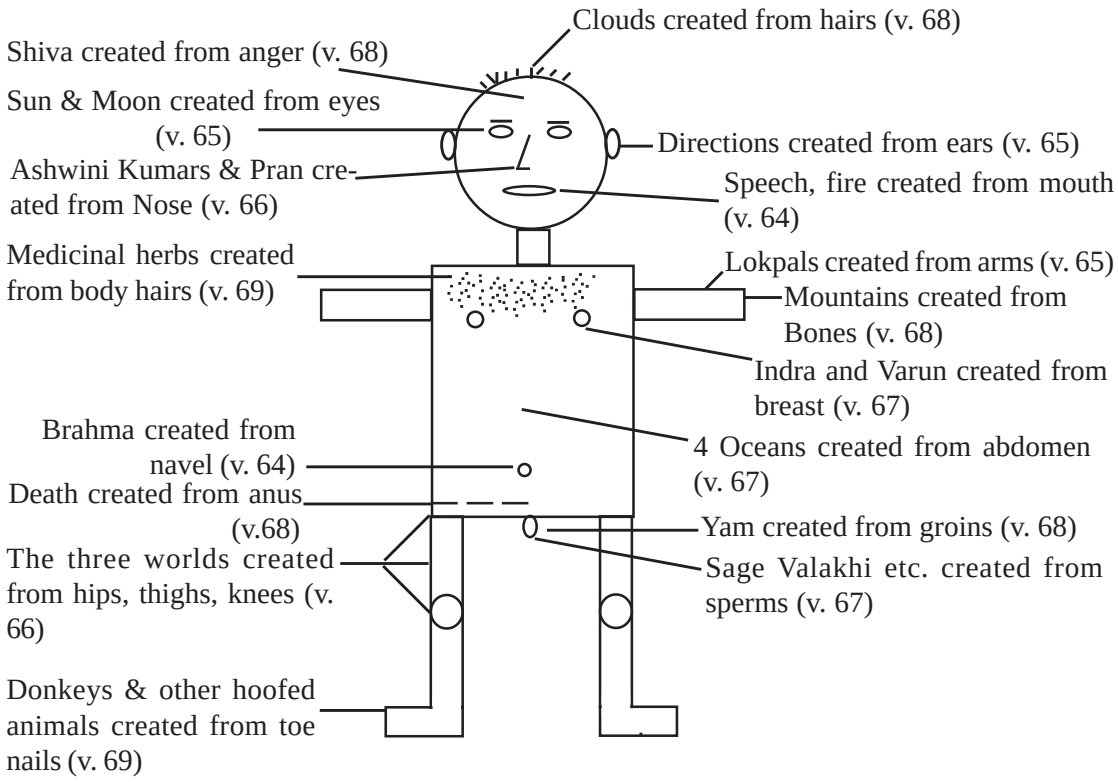
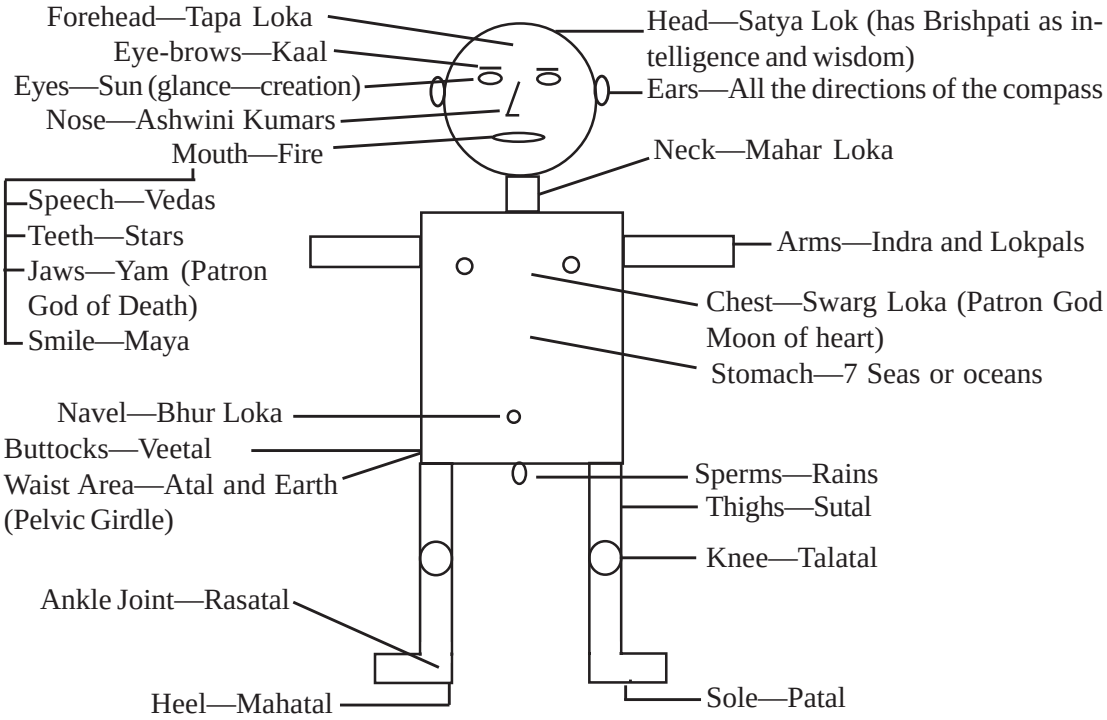


Diagram of Creation of the World from Viraat Purush

The Viraat Purush

(Adhyatma Ramayan—Aranya Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 36-45)



Note :-(a) Eyes (Sun) = (i) Glances—Creation; (ii) Blink—Night; (iii) Open—Day

(b) Body Hairs = Trees, Medicinal herbs, Creepers

(d) Enlightenment/Wisdom/Knowledge = Glory, Fame, Renown

Sketch Illustrating Relationship of Brahm, Maya & Jiva

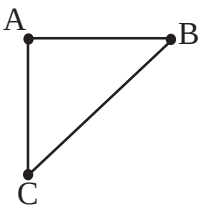


Fig 1

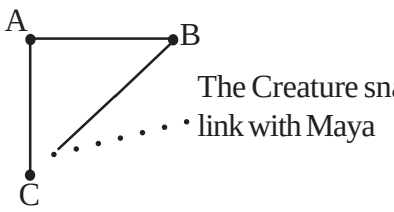


Fig 2

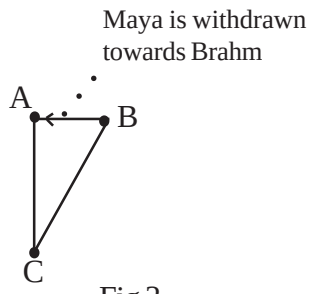


Fig 3

Fig 4

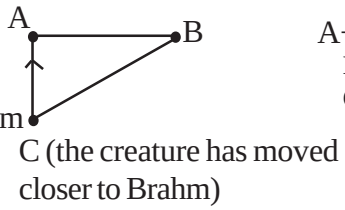


Fig 5

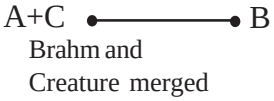


Fig 6

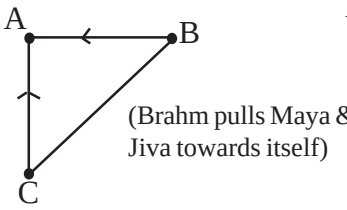


Fig 7

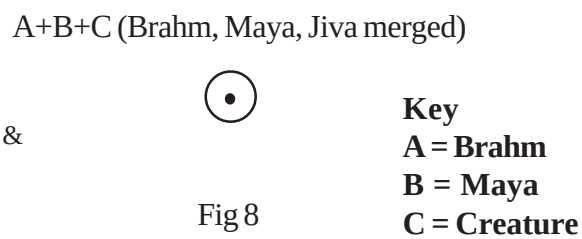


Fig 8

(Relationship between Brahm, Maya and Jiva.)

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author